

# The Spy Who Came in From the Cold



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN LE CARRÉ

David Cornwell was born into an unhappy home. His mother abandoned the family when he was five, and his father associated with organized criminals and was jailed for insurance fraud. After being educated in England and Switzerland, Cornwell joined the M15, the British domestic security service. In this job, he tried to learn about Soviet connections to far left-wing groups in England. In 1960, he joined the M16, Britain's foreign intelligence service, operating out of the British embassy in Bonn, West Germany and Hamburg. Bored with this work and unhappy in his marriage, Cornwell began writing, and published under the name John Le Carré. His first two books, *Call for the Dead* and *A Murder of Quality* were mystery novels, although both featured characters like Hans-Dietrich Mundt and George Smiley who would reappear in his later spy fiction. *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* was his first espionage novel. It was approved for publication by the M16, after they carefully vetted it for classified information and found none. The novel was a colossal success, and Cornwell went on to quit the M16 to work full-time as a novelist. Many of his books have been turned into acclaimed movies and television shows. In 2017, Le Carré will publish a new book that focuses on the character Peter Guillam, a character from *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. It will be the ninth book in the "George Smiley" series.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* takes place in London and Berlin in the early 1960s, at the peak of Cold War tensions. During the Second World War (1939-1945), the Western Allies, including Great Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union, fought against Nazi Germany and its Fascist allies. After the war, with the Nazis defeated, Western powers saw the Soviet Union as their primary rival. Many feared that another world war would break out between the nations allied with the Communist Soviet Union, including the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and the Capitalist, Liberal-Democratic Western nations countries like Great Britain and the United States, which allied with the Western German Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Berlin was the frontline between the two opposing systems. The city was located in the GDR, but its western half was controlled by Britain, France, and the United States, and considered a part of the FRG. In August of 1961, the GDR began to block access between East and West Berlin. Very quickly, the Berlin Wall became a virtually impenetrable barrier blocking East Germans from fleeing the

more limited economic opportunities and political repression of the Communist GDR.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Aside from the seven (soon to be eight) other novels Le Carré wrote about George Smiley and other members of the Circus, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* was part of an outpouring of Cold War espionage novels. The novel was immediately compared by critics to the Ian Fleming's hugely popular James Bond series. Many readers believed that Le Carré's work showed a chillingly realistic depiction of life in the secret services, unlike the glamorous fantasy presented in the Bond books. Graham Greene, who called *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* the "best spy story" he had read, also wrote novels about spies, including *Our Man in Havana*. Greene also wrote the screenplay for *The Third Man*, a film whose grim depiction of Berlin immediately after World War Two has a great deal in common with the Berlin Le Carré depicts in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. Finally, Alec Leamas mentions having read a book by Arthur Koestler, in which an old revolutionary faces torture. This is almost certainly *Darkness at Noon*, a book which revealed to many the barbaric abuses of power occurring in the Soviet Union under Stalin.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Spy Who Came in from the Cold
- **When Written:** 1961
- **Where Written:** Bonn, Germany
- **When Published:** 1963
- **Literary Period:** Cold War fiction
- **Genre:** Spy fiction
- **Setting:** West Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany; London, England; The Hague, Amsterdam; East Berlin, German Democratic Republic (GDR)
- **Climax:** Karden calls Liz as a witness at the Tribunal on Mundt's spying.
- **Antagonist:** Hans-Dieter Mundt
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Adaptations.** *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* was adapted into an award-winning film in 1965. As of 2017, the novel is being adapted into a television series by the BBC.

**Mysterious inspiration.** The character of Alec Leamas is based on a man Cornwell saw once in a bar in London's airport. The

man pulled a handful of coins from different countries out of his raincoat pocket, ordered a large scotch with “no bloody ice,” drank it in two gulps and shuffled away.



## PLOT SUMMARY

As the novel begins, Alec Leamas, the head of the Berlin station for the British secret service, waits at a checkpoint on the **Berlin Wall** for his agent Karl Riemeck, whose cover has been blown, to cross over to safety in the West. Riemeck’s mistress Elvira, who Leamas believes knows too much about the spy operation, crosses into West Berlin and tells Leamas that Riemeck will cross soon. As Leamas watches, Riemeck is shot and killed by the East German sentries. Riemeck is the last of Leamas’s agents in Berlin to be killed off by Hans-Dieter Mundt, the head of the East German secret service, the Abteilung.

Leamas is summoned back to London by Control, the head of the British intelligence agency called “the Circus.” Control tasks Leamas with one final mission before retiring: to kill Mundt. Leamas goes to Control’s house and meets with Peter Guillam and George Smiley, an agent and a former agent who worked on Mundt’s case back in 1959, when Mundt was a spy in London. Together the men hatch a plan.

To carry out the plan to kill Mundt, Leamas takes on a double identity. He is demoted to work in the banking department, where he becomes an alcoholic wreck, then disappears from the Circus entirely after being accused of stealing. Rumors circulate at the Circus that Leamas’s pension will be small, because of an interruption in his service after **World War Two**.

After leaving the Circus, Leamas lives in a squalid apartment, drinking too much and not socializing with anyone. He is sent by Mr. Pitt, a man at an employment agency whom he thinks he recognizes, to work at a library. There he meets a young Jewish woman and member of the Communist party named Liz Gold. They have an affair and Liz falls in love with Leamas. One night, she can tell that he is preparing to do something and that they must say goodbye. The next day, Leamas punches Ford, a grocer who refuses him credit, and goes to jail for three months.

When Leamas gets out of prison, he is approached by East German spies in London, Ashe and Kiever, who recruit him as a defector. They say he will get fifteen-thousand pounds now and another five thousand in a year for information he gives about his service. Leamas travels to The Hague, where he is interviewed by a Russian agent named Peters. Leamas tells Peters about how he first made contact with Karl Riemeck and about the intelligence Riemeck provided. Peters is skeptical that Riemeck would have had access to so much information. Leamas learns from Riemeck that Elvira was killed in West Germany, which puzzles him.

The next day, Leamas tells Peters about a special system for paying an agent that he worked on while in the Banking Department. For this operation, called Rolling Stone, Leamas opened joint accounts in Helsinki and Copenhagen. In each city, he deposited money into a joint account for himself under an alias and an agent who could collect it under an alias.

On the third day in Holland, Peters arrives late, so Leamas takes a walk on the beach. He thinks about Liz and how she made him remember what it feels like to take pleasure in life. He hopes to return to her. When Peters arrives, he tells Leamas that there is a wanted ad in the London papers for Leamas’s arrest. Leamas accuses Peters of having revealed his defection to London to force him to stay, but he actually suspects that Control is behind this. Peters tells him he must go to the East for his own safety and to be interrogated further, and they fly to Berlin.

Back in London, George Smiley and another agent visit Liz. They ask her questions about her relationship with Leamas. Smiley leaves Liz his card and tells her to be in touch if she needs anything.

Meanwhile, at a lodge outside Berlin, Leamas meets Fiedler, the second in command at the Abteilung and its best interrogator. Leamas is familiar with Fiedler’s dossier, and knows him to be merciless about killing to defend his Communist ideology. In planning to destroy Mundt, Control is counting on Fiedler to collect the evidence about Mundt (once Leamas frames him) and prosecute a case against his boss.

Fiedler and Leamas spend days walking through the hills, during which Fiedler asks Leamas about the details of his service and about his philosophy. Leamas steadfastly denies that he believes in anything. Fiedler is sure that Rolling Stone was meant to pay a spy working for the British in East Germany, but Leamas says that it would have been impossible for the British to run an agent there without his knowing. To try to determine which agent was paid through the Rolling Stone operation, Fiedler has Leamas write to the two banks to inquire about the accounts. He gets word back that the money was withdrawn from the bank in Copenhagen on days when Mundt traveled to that city.

Back in England, Liz receives an invitation to travel to Leipzig on a cultural exchange with another branch of the Communist party. She finds it odd that the Party would take special notice of someone as insignificant as her, but puts her doubts aside, hoping that the trip will take her mind off Leamas.

Leamas and Fiedler return to the lodge, after a drive during which Fiedler tells Leamas that he suspects Mundt of being a British agent. When they arrive they are arrested. Leamas resists arrest and kills a German sentry before being knocked unconscious. He wakes up in a prison, badly beaten and tied up. Mundt interrogates him, demanding to know the details of the British plot to frame him. Mundt says that Leamas could be

shown mercy for murdering the sentry, if he testifies that Fiedler is part of a British plot to frame Mundt. Leamas does not confess. Mundt asks him over and over when the last time he saw George Smiley was, when suddenly a number of people rush into the room. Mundt is arrested and Leamas is brought to a hospital.

When Leamas wakes up, Fiedler is standing at his bedside. Fiedler tells him that he had already submitted a report on his suspicions about Mundt to the Praesidium (legislative committee) when Mundt had them arrested, and now there will be a Tribunal to determine if Mundt is a British spy. Leamas will have to testify.

Meanwhile, in Leipzig, Liz is enjoying her visit until she is disappointed by how sparsely attended the Branch Meeting is. After the meeting, a man named Holten comes and tells Liz that her itinerary has changed and that he will bring her to a special meeting on the Polish border. Liz goes with him.

The Tribunal takes place in a small courtroom, overseen by three members of the Praesidium. First Fiedler presents the case against Mundt, explaining that Mundt was caught by the British while in London and turned into a British spy. He calls on Leamas to testify, but first explains that Mundt recruited Riembeck to be his intermediary with Leamas, so Leamas is unaware that Mundt was a British agent. Fiedler calls for Mundt to be sentenced to death.

Next, Mundt's defender, Karden, speaks. He contends that Leamas was sent by the British to bring down Mundt with Fiedler's help. He calls on Leamas to testify and asks whether he was friendless and penniless when he defected. Leamas affirms this. Karden asks if George Smiley might have wanted to help him and Leamas says no. Karden then asks for his witness to be brought in.

To Leamas's shock and horror, Liz enters the courtroom. Liz is terrified and wants to protect Leamas, but she does not know what the trial is about. She testifies that George Smiley visited her after Leamas went away, and provides evidence that Leamas was not as broke as he says he was. Karden says that this proves that Leamas's defection was staged by London. Leamas is flabbergasted that London compromised his mission by contacting Liz. To try to save Fiedler and Liz, he testifies that Karden is right: the whole thing was a set-up. It is not until he has finished his testimony that he realizes the truth: Mundt really is London's man, and London sent him on this mission to frame and kill Fiedler, who suspected Mundt, and to protect Mundt.

Later that night, Mundt comes to the prison cell where Liz is being held and ushers her out into the night, where Leamas is waiting by a car. They drive towards Berlin. Leamas explains to Liz the way London used them to achieve its end, and Liz is horrified. They pick up a man who gives them instructions for how to climb over Berlin Wall without being shot by the

sentries. Liz wonders why she has been let go: she is a Communist who knows the Circus's secrets.

At the Berlin Wall, Leamas climbs to the top and then reaches back down to lift Liz over. Then searchlights come on, and Liz is shot several times. From the Western side of the Berlin Wall, Leamas hears George Smiley calling for him to come across. Instead, Leamas climbs back down to the Eastern side, where Liz lies dead, and he too is shot by the sentries.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Alec Leamas** – A tough, hard-drinking man of fifty, Alec Leamas has worked for the British secret service – the Circus – since **World War Two**. During his wartime service, he saw many innocent people killed, and he hides how traumatized he was by his experiences behind a tough exterior. He had a wife and two children, but left them many years before the novel's beginning. He lived in the Netherlands as a child and speaks Dutch and German, but, unlike most of the members of the Circus, comes from a working-class background. He dislikes what he sees as the impractical politeness and pretension of the British upper class. At the start of the novel, Leamas has worked as the head of the Berlin station for ten years, from 1951 to 1961, building up a network of spies, most importantly Karl Riembeck, who supplied him with information about the East German state and their secret service, the Abteilung.

**Hans-Dieter Mundt** – A former member of the Nazi party, current member of the Abteilung, and secret British agent, Hans-Dieter Mundt is a cynical, cold-blooded killer and anti-Semite. Before the action of the novel, he worked as an East German spy in London, was involved in a murder, and tried to kill George Smiley. After returning to Berlin, he was promoted to lead the Abteilung, although he only escaped being captured by the British after pledging to be a British double agent. Over the next two years, he supplies the British with excellent information, using Karl Riembeck as an intermediary. He kills other East German British agents as soon as he feels they may be a threat to his position. In collaboration with Control, who wants to shift suspicion away from Mundt, Mundt prepares to discredit Leamas in an East German court by showing that Leamas was sent by Britain to frame him. Mundt is the antagonist of the novel, and clearly has no allegiance to either side he works for or the ideologies they represent.

**Liz Gold** – A trusting, sensitive, and intelligent Jewish woman in her early twenties, Liz Gold is a member of the Communist party. She becomes Leamas's lover after meeting him at the library where they both work. Later, she receives a visit from George Smiley and a lease for an apartment in the mail, which she believes come from Leamas or his friend. She is invited by the Communist party to a Branch meeting in East Germany, but

this is only a pretext to get her to the country so that she can be brought to a tribunal to give testimony that proves that the British sought to frame Mundt.

**Fiedler** – The second-in-command at the Abteilung, Fiedler is a Jew and a true believer in the Communist cause. As a child, he fled the Nazis with his parents, but returned to join the Communist political movement in East Germany after the war. Although the crimes of Stalin are being publicized at this time, Fiedler remains a dedicated Stalinist, who believes that individuals may be killed in order to make progress towards Communism. Fiedler has begun to suspect Mundt of being a British agent, which is why Control sends Leamas on his mission. Leamas believes that his target is Mundt, but he is actually supposed to discredit Fiedler, who prosecutes the case against Mundt. Fiedler comes to like and trust Leamas, who he sees as a simple operator, lacking in analytical skills.

**Karl Riemeck** – A member of the East German government, Riemeck becomes a spy for the British. Riemeck is a member of the Secretariat and the Praesidium, which gives him access to documents that he photographs and gives to the British. Riemeck tells his lover, Elvira, a great deal, and Leamas believes that this is what gets him killed. Riemeck is killed by Mundt after he comes under suspicion of spying for the British. It is revealed at the end of the novel that Riemeck was actually Mundt's intermediary, whom Mundt killed to protect himself.

**Control** – The head of the British secret service, or “the Circus,” Control is a member of the upper class, whose polite and banal manner conceals his deep cynicism and manipulative intelligence. Control convinces Leamas, who he sees as expendable, to go on a mission to frame Mundt. In fact, Control wants Leamas to be brought to trial and discredited in East Germany in order to protect Mundt and discredit Fiedler.

**George Smiley** – A former agent for the Circus, Smiley is retired when the novel begins. In 1959, before the action of the novel, Smiley worked on a case involving Mundt, who was then a spy in England and tried to kill Smiley. He plays a shadowy role in Control's plot to save Mundt, and it is never made clear whether he really wanted to see Mundt killed or saved. Smiley is a central character in many of Le Carré's other works.

**Peter Guillam** – An agent in the Circus who worked on Mundt's case with George Smiley in 1959, before the action of the novel, Peter Guillam works in a department called Satellite Four. Leamas says that he believes this department works on economic issues in East Germany, but Fiedler believes that it's responsible for coordinating Mundt's activity spying for the British.

**Ashe** – A low-level Communist spy working in London, Ashe makes contact with Leamas as soon as he gets out of prison, then introduces him to his superior, Sam Kiever, who, in turn, brings Leamas to Holland to meet with the Russian interrogator Peters. Ashe also goes to Liz's branch meetings of

the Communist party, takes Liz out to coffee afterwards, and asks her questions about herself and her love life.

**Elvira** – Karl Riemeck's mistress, Elvira is suspected of having revealed that Riemeck was spying for the British to the East Germans, leading to his assassination by Mundt. Later, she is assassinated in West Berlin. Leamas believes that Mundt must have had her killed, but the fact that she dies in West Berlin suggests that the British were involved in her death.

**Mr. Pitt** – A man who works at the Labor Exchange and sets Leamas up with a series of jobs, finally sending him to work at the Bayswater Library for Psychic Research so that he will meet Liz Gold. Pitt is working for the Circus, and Leamas vaguely recognizes him, but when Leamas asks Control who Pitt is, Control says he does not know.

**George Hanby** – The treasurer of Liz's local Communist association, Hanby witnesses the altercation between Leamas and Ford. He talks to a man in spectacles (probably George Smiley) who tells him how spontaneously the fight occurred, and he reports this to the local Communist newspaper, where an article on the incident is printed.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Ford the Grocer** – The grocer in the working-class neighborhood where Leamas lives while working at the library. Ford refuses to let Leamas buy groceries on credit, because he's heard that Leamas is an impoverished alcoholic. Leamas punches Ford and goes to jail, but Ford later gets paid off by the Circus.

**De Jong** – An agent working Leamas in Berlin, De Jong is the first to make contact with Karl Riemeck.

**Sam Kiever** – A mid-level Communist spy working in London, Kiever spells out the details of the offer the Communists will make Leamas to defect, supplies him with a passport and luggage, and brings him to Holland for interrogation by Peters.

**Peters** – A Russian interrogator, Peters spends several days in Holland interrogating Leamas about his time in the Circus, then sends the report to the Abteilung. Once Leamas is revealed to be “wanted” in England, Peters brings Leamas to East Germany to be interrogated by Fiedler.

**Miss Crail** – The boss at the library where Leamas and Liz work. Miss Crail detests Leamas.

**Frau Ebert** – A housewife and Branch Secretary in Leipzig who hosts Liz during her trip to that city.

**Holten** – An East German official who brings Liz from Leipzig to the Tribunal.

**Fawley** – An agent who works in Personnel at the Circus, Fawley and Leamas dislike one another because Fawley is a polished member of the upper class and Leamas hates snobs.

**Karden** – A former Nazi, Karden is a condescending and formal

man who leads Mundt's defense in the Tribunal.

**The President** – The President is a stern middle-aged woman (unnamed) who heads the three-person Tribunal summoned by the Praesidium to consider Fiedler's report accusing Mundt of spying for the British.

**The Prison Wardress** – A brutal woman who recites party dogmas to justify killing. The Prison Wardress watches over Liz after she has testified to the East German Tribunal. Her bloodthirsty attitude shows Liz that the Communist side is not blameless.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



### IDEOLOGY AND MORALITY

*The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* takes place at the height of Cold War tensions, when the competition for dominance of Europe between the

Communist Soviet Union and the Capitalist West was at its fiercest. Most of the novel's characters are spies on one side or the other of this ideological divide. But the novel is less interested in answering the ideological question of whether the right system for running human society is a Communist one or a Capitalist one than it is in examining the ways in which the two battling systems justify the loss of innocent lives that results from their war for supremacy.

The spies on the Western side—Leamas, Control, and Smiley—are ostensibly fighting to defend liberal democracy, a system which values the rights of individuals and seeks to protect their freedoms from state oppression. This system prizes its ability to function democratically and according to the rule of law (the principle that the law applies to all members of a society equally). The rights of the individual are not meant to be sacrificed in the name of a larger goal set by the state.

The East German spies like Fiedler and Mundt defend an entirely different set of principles. They hope to spread Communism, an ideology that promises to bring peace and prosperity to all people by redistributing wealth. Communist doctrine says that, to create this fairer, better world for the vast majority of people, it may be necessary to kill certain enemies that get in the way.

Each side sees its actions as justified by its principles, but as it spies on its enemy and works to uncover and stop agents spying in its territory, each acts with inhuman cruelty, disregarding the loss of innocent lives and the human instinct

to remain loyal to specific people instead of organizations or ideas.

Communists like Fiedler see these sacrifices as worth it: after all, it is part of the Communist ideology that the transition from Capitalism to Communism will require the deaths of both enemies and innocents. They are aware of the many innocent people whose murder has been justified ideologically by Communist leaders like Stalin, and they intend to continue to be just as merciless in carrying out the killing they see as necessary.

Others, like Mundt and Leamas, are cynics, working as spies not because they believe in a cause. For Leamas, spying is one of the only jobs he is good at, so he pledges his life to it, despite feeling disgust for the bloodshed he sees. Mundt, on the other hand, has been a Nazi, but becomes a Communist who betrays Communism and spies for the British. He is the novel's true villain. Although the novel holds up Communists' insensitivity to the value of human life as despicable, the novel shows its true message – that each side is capable of equal evil – by having the coldblooded killer Mundt fight on the British side of the Cold War battle.

Liz Gold, the one protagonist who is not involved in intelligence collection, is a member of the Communist party because she believes in fairness, peace, and equality. Like many Communists of that era, she is still largely unaware of the acts of state violence and genocide that have been committed in the name of Communism. During this time, the knowledge of Stalin's crimes was only just starting to spread to those outside of the Soviet Union, and Liz is shocked to see the evidence of this attitude toward human life when she is in East Germany, especially during her conversation with the Prison Wardress—but she also sees the British willingness to allow Mundt to arrange for her to be brought to East Germany for the trial as perhaps a more terrible abuse. Liz looks back at the way she was manipulated and feels sure that any ideological justification for what was done to her would ring hollow. The novel suggests through Liz's character that individual morality should trump ideology.

The novel compares the two systems: one which believes that the deaths of innocents may be necessary for the greater good, one which claims that there is no excuse for extralegal killings. But it shows that these two systems operate in much the same way. Although in Britain, state-sanctioned violence is not used against domestic political opponents, but to defend the political system against foreign enemies seeking to undermine liberal democracy, the spies responsible for defending this system often break with the principles they are defending by killing innocents and rejecting the truth. For the other side, ideas are considered more important than people, and so the death of an innocent person can always be justified as necessary for the greater good of society, no matter how farfetched this seems. In Le Carré's harsh worldview, both systems are thus ultimately

characterized by inhumanity, hypocrisy, and a cynical view of the value of human life and social progress.



## ALIENATION AND CONNECTION

Alec Leamas, the middle-aged, world-weary spy who is *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*'s protagonist, is deeply alienated from other people and from society. During **World War II** and after, he has seen a great deal of violence that has made him suspicious of human nature and afraid to get close to anyone. He divorced his wife and has not had contact with his children in many years. But although he presents the figure of a broken man—traumatized, self-destructive, and anti-social—the novel suggests that these very qualities make him an ideal agent for the spying mission he is sent on.

The state of mental toughness required of spies while undercover is referred to as “being out in the **cold**.” Because spies must often pretend to be people they are not and must often betray those they’re close to in order to complete their missions, a kind of impersonal detachment is important to their work. This, paradoxically, can lead to the state of mind that Leamas finds himself in: sacrificing his entire life to protect a society from which he feels alienated.

To “come in from the cold” is given two different meanings in the novel, with each usage emphasizing the importance of alienation to spy work. First, “to come in from the cold” means to give up spy work, thereby ceasing to work in the inhospitable “cold” of enemy territory. While operating undercover, as Leamas does throughout his final mission, he cannot take anyone into his confidence or unburden himself of the anxieties that his work entails. There is no one who can sympathize with him, no source of human warmth for him to rely on. He hopes that after this mission, he will give up spy work and return to Liz Gold, with whom he felt a human connection for the first time in a long time.

The second meaning of “coming in from the cold” relates to this choice of human connection over alienation. Leamas disapproves of how his agent Riemeck has told his mistress Elvira about his intelligence work. He feels betrayed by Riemeck because he trusted Riemeck to trust no one and reveal no secrets, to “stay out in the cold” as a spy by staying detached from human connection. In the first chapter, when Leamas leaves the checkpoint to speak to Elvira about Riemeck, he steps out into an “icy October wind” and then returns to the checkpoint hut “in from the cold.” These repeated descriptions of the cold weather are no coincidence. Falling in love with someone and telling them everything, putting an intimate connection ahead of operational work, is the second sense in which a spy can “come in from the cold.”

Leamas himself “comes in from the cold” in this second sense, too. First, when he feels a human connection to Liz, he hopes

that he will be able to return to her when he completes his mission and gives up spy work: when he “comes in from the cold” in the first sense. Although he never tells her the details of his operation, he hints that he will be going away to do a job. Telling Liz even this much represents a failure to place the mission above his personal life.

In the end, when Liz is killed, Leamas “comes in from the cold” by refusing to obey Smiley’s command to leave her behind and choosing to die with her. He climbs back down to her corpse, where he is shot, thereby “coming in from the cold” by prioritizing his connection to her over his mission and the alienation from other people that it demands of him. With Leamas’s decision to die with Liz, the novel shows that the world of espionage is so brutal and dangerous that the spy’s ultimate choice is not just between connection to other people and alienation from them for the sake of the mission, but also a choice between alienation from other people and death.



## IDENTITY AND AUTONOMY

*The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* explores the emotional experience and outward behavior of an individual who attempts to perform an assumed identity. Even for a spy, attempting to stick to a role is mentally exhausting and can make the individual easy to manipulate. Both the Circus, the British spying headquarters, and its East German counterpart the Abteilung use this to their advantage. The novel tracks the process by which Alec Leamas loses track of his actual identity, making him more easily manipulated by the large organization he works for. Alec Leamas is asked by the head of British intelligence, Control, to perform the identity of a gruff, anti-social, burnt-out alcoholic for an operation, which he believes is meant to frame the East German agent Hans-Dieter Mundt. This identity, however, is not too different from Leamas’s actual identity. Leamas is already emotionally battered by the death of so many of his agents at Mundt’s hands. His assumed identity is actually then just a speeding up of the process of his own physical and mental deterioration, as he accentuates his own worst qualities, drinking like a fish and lashing out violently.

Control leads Leamas to believe that by assuming this identity he will be able to lure the East German side to recruit him as a defector, at which point he will give evidence that will lead the East Germans to try Mundt as a traitor. But unknown to Leamas, Mundt is working for the British, and Control means for Leamas’s plot to be discovered. Control wants the East Germans to believe that Leamas has been sent by the British to frame Mundt, because if the East Germans believe they have uncovered a British plot to discredit Mundt, this will assure them that Mundt is, in fact, a loyal agent. As his assumed and “true” identities blur more and more, Leamas becomes all the less likely to suspect that he is being manipulated himself. He views his own mental collapse as if it is a necessary part of his

job, a masterful performance, when it is actually playing into the hands of his bosses.

The novel also explores the feelings and behavior of an individual who wishes to put on a performance, but does not know what kind of performance to choose. Unlike Leamas, who believes he is assuming an identity to serve a mission, when Liz Gold is summoned to testify in an East German court, she does not know what the case is about or how she should act to protect Leamas. She flounders helplessly, trying to discover the right way to answer the lawyer's questions, and whether she ought to lie or tell the truth. Liz is extremely disturbed by the feeling that everyone in the courtroom is learning a secret from her testimony that she does not herself understand. She wants to have control over the impression she makes, but, since she does not know what information the lawyer is hoping to get from her testimony, she does not know how to fabricate a story. She has lost her autonomy and she knows it.

Leamas believes he is in control of his identity, while Liz hates her lack of control of the impression she is creating, but in the end, both Leamas and Liz are pawns in the hands of the intelligence services. Neither can autonomously control the effect their behavior has on others. In fact, Liz has a firmer grasp of where she really stands than Leamas does. Once she understands how British Intelligence used her to pursue its goal, she sees that it is illogical that she be allowed to survive. Leamas, on the other hand, is too broken down by trying to play a role whose purpose he never understood to recognize that Liz will be killed on the **Berlin Wall**. The novel suggests that autonomy is impossible when the individual's identity is being manipulated by a large, impersonal organization like the Abteilung or the Circus.



## LOYALTY AND BETRAYAL

Loyalty or the lack thereof is a defining quality of the characters in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. Each character presents a unique

combination of loyalties: some are most loyal to organizations and ideologies, while others are dedicated to moral principles and to other people. Some characters, however, are willing to betray anyone or anything for their own gain.

Loyalty to an organization is of the utmost importance for spies and intelligence operators, but it does not guarantee that the organization will show loyalty to the spy in return. Leamas is loyal to the Circus, the British Intelligence Organization. In giving his loyalty to this organization, he cuts himself off from other people, knowing that, if push came to shove, he would betray them in order to stay loyal to his work. But despite his efforts to isolate himself from others, Leamas does care about other people. He is sickened by the deaths of the agents he leads in Berlin. He has harrowing memories of refugees he saw killed during **War World II** and of nearly killing a careful of

children while speeding on the Autobahn. Although Leamas seems too alienated to fall in love with Liz the way she falls in love with him, he does feel loyalty towards her. In the end, the Circus finally goes one step too far in its betrayal of him by orchestrating Liz's death, and Leamas chooses loyalty to Liz over the organization, as he decides to die with her.

Control may seem to be loyal to the Circus, the organization he runs, but he is not loyal to anyone who works there, only to the organization's mission, and, by extension, only to his own success in leading that mission. Control has no qualms volunteering Leamas for a harrowing experience in East German prison and court, where he faces possible execution. But his betrayal of Leamas goes deeper than exposing him to this physical danger. This is because of the way Control misleads Leamas about the nature of the mission. Leamas had been eager to go on the mission to frame Mundt and see him killed, not only out of loyalty to the Circus, but also to avenge the deaths of the many agents he had supervised and Mundt had murdered. In forcing Leamas to unwittingly risk his own life to protect Mundt's, Control forces Leamas to violate his sense of loyalty and connection to the agents whom Mundt killed.

Mundt is only loyal to himself, and perhaps to the defeated Nazi cause. An ex-Hitler youth, current East German spy chief, and British double agent, Mundt is a cold-blooded killer seemingly lacking in loyalty. Rather than helping agents, who, like him, are East Germans spying for the British, to escape from East Berlin, he kills them as soon as it seems like they are suspected by the East Germans and could expose his own role in spying for the British. Mundt is an unreformed Nazi. As he interrogates and tortures Fiedler, he whispers anti-Semitic taunts in his ear. Loyal only to a failed political ideology that preached his own racial superiority to other people, Mundt now cynically provides his services as a spy to whichever secret service will protect him and pay him well.

Loyalty to loved ones goes together with loyalty to moral principles, as displayed in the character of Liz Gold. Although she believes herself to be a loyal Communist, as she begins to see the moral compromises that Communist authorities make, she is repulsed. Liz, like Leamas, is betrayed by the organization she has pledged loyalty to when the Communist party organization lures her to East Germany on a false pretense to have her undermine Leamas's testimony in court. But although Liz is a Communist party member, she is mainly interested in the party as a method to promote peace and protect people. When she is urged to remain loyal to the Communist cause when testifying in court where she believes Leamas—a person she loves—to be in danger, she feels nothing but a desire to protect Leamas.

Liz does not live long enough to denounce Communism. But although she is more disgusted by the callousness of the British in protecting Mundt than she is by the way the Communist side used and manipulated her, she is also chilled by hearing the

Prison Wardress glorify killing for ideology's sake. It seems likely that if she had made it over the **Berlin Wall**, Liz would have reassessed her Communist loyalties. In this way, Liz is typical of this moment in Cold War history. Her character represents the possibility to reprioritize and change one's loyalties, a possibility that many Communist party members outside of the Soviet Union faced as knowledge of Stalin's genocidal crimes spread abroad in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Total loyalty to an ideology leads characters to act immorally and to ultimately compromise their own survival. Fiedler, a Jew who returned from Canada to Germany to work in the Communist East German special services, is a true believer in Communism. But by moving into a work environment full of unreformed Nazis like Mundt, he opens himself up to being attacked by those who hate him because he is Jewish. Fiedler is a somewhat sympathetic character. He is a true believer in Communism and dedicates his life to trying to build a fair and peaceful world. He also shows kindness to Liz in the courtroom. But Fiedler is so loyal to Communism that he buys into the theory that the deaths of innocents are allowable if it moves society closer to Communism. And, whereas Mundt is an unreformed Nazi, Fiedler is an unreformed Stalinist. In the end, Fiedler himself becomes the innocent killed senselessly by the system whose right to commit senseless murders he has defended.

*The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* paints a bleak picture of the cost of being loyal in this environment of Cold War struggle. Although the novel portrays those characters with strongly felt loyalties in a sympathetic light, it suggests that loyalty to anything outside of one's own interests can lead the individual down a path to being humiliated, manipulated, and ultimately killed by those who are willing to betray anyone and anything. And, once more, this characteristic is not unique to either the Communist or Capitalist system in particular, but yet another way in which they are alike in their brutality.



### ELITES AND OTHERS

*The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* is not only concerned with the Cold War tensions between the Communist and Capitalist systems—it also looks at tensions between haves and have-nots in both societies, tensions stretching back far into their histories. In particular, the novel points to the way social class and religious identity can define an individual's opportunities in each society. And, once again, the novel finds more similarities than differences between East and West than the ideologists of either side would wish to admit.

The British intelligence service, the Circus, is mainly run by members of the Christian upper class. These men and women speak, dress, and think differently from the protagonist, Alec Leamas, who grew up abroad and comes from a working-class

background. Leamas despises what he sees as the snobbishness of the people with whom he works, and there are some indications that they also dislike him. Although Leamas's boss Control is too polite to ever express his prejudice against Leamas, by sending Leamas on a dangerous mission that he can predict will entail a great deal of physical and mental suffering he betrays how little value he places on Leamas's life. The impression that Control, along with the rest of the British society that he is charged with protecting, cares less about those outside his own social sphere is also suggested by his decision to use Liz as a pawn in his scheme to save Mundt. Liz is not only poor; she is also Jewish and a Communist. This makes her life worth even less to Control than Leamas's.

On the East German side, despite an ideology that calls for equality and fairness under Communism, a continuity between past and present has preserved the position of elites at the top, including Nazis. Hans-Dieter Mundt rose through the ranks as a Nazi, and has been able to—seemingly easily—switch over to become a Communist. He, like the upper-class agents of the Circus, is an elite who can rise to the top of his society's organizations. Although East Germany's ally the Soviet Union fought the Nazis, it did not do so in order to protect Jews. Both the Nazi past and the Soviet-influenced present encourage anti-Semitism among the East German intelligence agencies. In this society, anti-Semitism sometimes seems so prevalent as to override other ideologies entirely. The Russian agent Peters, Mundt, and the Prison Wardress all express anti-Semitic views. In this environment, Fiedler is entirely unmatched to face down Mundt. When Mundt's lawyer Karden brings Liz into the tribunal to discredit Leamas, Fiedler can point out why the proof that Leamas was sent to frame Mundt is also, simultaneously, evidence that Mundt is a British agent. But, because this tribunal is full of people who see themselves in Mundt and are rooting for him because he is like them, Fiedler's logic goes unheard. In the end, the tribunal would rather kill Fiedler because he is Jewish than listen to his logic, which would lead them to kill Mundt because he is a traitor.

*The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* shows the unfair and ugly treatment of those outside of religious and class elites in both societies. This is yet another way that the novel creates the impression that both Communist East Germany and the Capitalist West are equally morally bankrupt societies that treat individuals unfairly and inhumanely.



### SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



## THE COLD

Working undercover as a spy is referred to throughout the novel as being “in the cold.” In this sense, the cold represents the danger, isolation, and emotional hardship of spy work. To “come in from the cold” means to retire as a spy, but also symbolizes the emotional relief (and renewed potential for human connection) that comes with that decision. When the novel refers to literal cold weather, this lends a physical dimension to the emotional experience of struggling to survive and remain human as a spy. (Also see the “Alienation and Connection” theme.)



## LORRIES

After Leamas nearly kills a carful of children driving on a highway while lorries (trucks) speed nearby, the huge vehicles come to symbolize the impersonal forces that crush individuals in the modern world. As a spy, Leamas wants to see what he does as working to protect innocent people, like the carful of children, but he comes to realize that his work – whether it calls for him to speed on the highway, or to send his agents into harm’s way – often leads him to endanger these innocents. In the novel’s final sentence, as Leamas dies, the image he sees is of the carful of children passing by, while his own car is crushed between enormous trucks. At this moment, Leamas sees that he too is a sensitive human being, capable of being unfairly mowed down by forces larger than himself.



## WORLD WAR II

Although the novel describes a struggle between two Cold War-era intelligence agencies, it is a world shaped by the “hot,” or violent, war that was fought less than two decades before. Each of the characters is shaped by the violence experienced during this period. Leamas often recalls seeing the corpses of refugees, while Liz, who was only a child during the war, lost her father during it. Questions of how to move on after this enormous carnage, what lessons should be learned, and how another war can be prevented hang over all of the characters.



## LIZ'S HAIR

Leamas is in many ways too traumatized by a life filled with death and cynicism to fully fall in love with Liz, but their relationship reminds him of the possibilities of human tenderness and appreciating life’s small pleasures. This tenderness makes him protective of her. In intimate moments, Leamas pulls on Liz’s hair. When he sees a girl with similar hair on the beach, he thinks of Liz. And when he looks at Liz’s corpse, he sees her hair covering her face as if to protect her in a way he could not. Liz’s hair, then, symbolizes the desire

to feel connected to someone and to protect that person from danger.



## THE BERLIN WALL

The Berlin Wall has only recently been built and is still being fortified during the period when the novel’s action takes place. For many living through this period of history, the Wall was *the* symbol of Cold War divisions and tensions. In the novel, the Wall symbolizes not only a world divided in two, however. It is also a symbol of the violence that threatens anyone who tries to go between these two sides, as well as the threat of another outbreak of massive war between countries.



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Books edition of *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* published in 2013.

### Chapter 1 Quotes

●● That damned woman, thought Leamas, and that fool Karl who'd lied about her. Lied by omission, as they all do, agents the world over. You teach them to cheat, to cover their tracks, and they cheat you as well. He'd only produced her once, after that dinner in the Schürzstrasse last year. Karl had just had his big scoop and Control had wanted to meet him. Control always came in on success. They'd had dinner together—Leamas, Control, and Karl. Karl loved that kind of thing. He turned up looking like a Sunday School boy, scrubbed and shining, doffing his hat and all respectful. Control had shaken his hand for five minutes and said: "I want you to know how pleased we are, Karl, damn pleased." Leamas had watched and thought, "That'll cost us another couple of hundred a year." When they'd finished dinner Control pumped their hands again, nodded significantly and implying that he had to go off and risk his life somewhere else, got back into his chauffeur-driven car.

**Related Characters:** Elvira, Control, Karl Riemeck, Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 6

### Explanation and Analysis

Leamas is waiting for his agent Karl Riemeck to pass through the checkpoints at the Berlin Wall from East Berlin to West Berlin. He is nervous that Riemeck will not be allowed to pass through, because he believes that the East

Germans suspect Riemeck of spying for the British. Leamas believes that the reason Riemeck is suspected is because he opened up too much to his lover, Elvira. As he reflects on what he considers Riemeck's mistake, the novel introduces us to one of Leamas's greatest fears: that he will get close to someone and betray his mission. Leamas believes that a spy must hold himself apart from human relationships to stay clearheaded and focused on his mission.

Leamas also sees Control's visit to speak to Riemeck in class terms. He sees Control as a snob who does not understand the real fundamental work of spying. Control likely understands this prejudice of Leamas's, and exploits it to manipulate Leamas and keep secrets from him.

Later it will turn out that both these strong beliefs of Leamas's blind him to what is actually occurring: Control is coming to Berlin not out of a kind of impractical, upper-class vanity, but in order to communicate with Riemeck without going through Leamas. Leamas also continues to incorrectly believe that Elvira was responsible for Riemeck's death, which leads him to fear that his relationship with Liz could similarly undermine his work and endanger the mission. These two beliefs of Leamas keep him blinded to what is truly going on (that Control is hiding from him the existence of another spy in Berlin).

## Chapter 2 Quotes

☝ "I wondered whether you were tired. Burnt out." There was a long silence.

"That's up to you," Leamas said at last.

"We have to live without sympathy, don't we? That's impossible of course. We act it to one another, all this hardness; but we aren't like that really, I mean. . . one can't be out in the cold all the time; one has to come in from the cold. . . d'you see what I mean?"

Leamas saw. He saw the long road outside Rotterdam, the long straight road beside the dunes, and the stream of refugees moving along it; saw the little aeroplane miles away, the procession stop and look towards it; and the plane coming in, nearly over the dunes; saw the chaos, the meaningless hell, as the bombs hit the road.

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas, Control

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 15

## Explanation and Analysis

After the murder of Riemeck, Leamas's last living agent in Berlin, Leamas has returned to London to discuss what he does next with his boss, Control. Control proposes that Leamas go on one last mission, but first asks if Leamas has been through too much stress already. Control refers to the state of mental toughness required of spies while undercover as "being out in the cold." He describes a life without the comfort that comes from intimate relationships and being able to confide in someone. But Leamas's thoughts in reaction to what Control says give insight into his character. Although Leamas presents a tough exterior, he is deeply scarred by the emotional trauma he experienced during World War II and later. Instead of thinking about a lover he gave up or his children from whom he is estranged, Leamas remembers a scene of incredible carnage, when bombs were dropped onto many refugees walking on a road during his time in the Netherlands during World War II.

Throughout the novel, Leamas seems to shy away from close relationships to protect his ability to focus on his mission. But in this moment, it seems that the reason he may struggle to get close to anyone, or to have a family, is because of all the innocent people he saw killed during the war. He knows that each of those refugees was someone's loved one, and he cannot cope with the idea of loving someone and losing them to a world that has shown him its most brutal side.

☝ "Thus we do disagreeable things, but we are *defensive*. That, I think, is still fair. We do disagreeable things so that ordinary people here and elsewhere can sleep safely in their beds at night. Is that too romantic? Of course, we occasionally do very wicked things"; he grinned like a schoolboy. "And in weighing up the moralities, we rather go in for dishonest comparisons; after all, you can't compare the ideals of one side with the methods of the other, can you, now?" Leamas was lost. He'd heard the man talked a lot of drivel before getting the knife in, but he'd never heard anything like this before.

"I mean you've got to compare method with method, and ideal with ideal. I would say that since the war, our methods—ours and those of the opposition—have become much the same. I mean you can't be less ruthless than the opposition simply because your government's *policy* is benevolent, can you now?"

**Related Characters:** Control (speaker), Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 15-16

### Explanation and Analysis

Control has asked Leamas to do one last mission, and he is leading up to telling Leamas that he wants him to orchestrate Mundt's death. Control is framing his request that Leamas work to get a man killed by offering philosophical justifications. Control presents the paradox of acting immorally and outside the law to defend a liberal ideology that is supposed to be based on a respect for human life and the rule of law. Control contrasts this value to that of the Communists, who believe that many immoral acts can be justified if they are meant to facilitate the creation of a Communist society. According to Control, Western spies must commit immoral acts to stay on a level playing field with their Communist enemies; otherwise they will lose the struggle to that enemy. For Leamas, a man of action, these intellectual considerations are nearly incomprehensible and beside the point.

### Chapter 3 Quotes

☛ The process of going to seed is generally considered to be a protracted one, but in Leamas this was not the case. In the full view of his colleagues he was transformed from a man honourably put aside to a resentful, drunken wreck—and all within a few months. There is a kind of stupidity among drunks, particularly when they are sober, a kind of disconnection which the unobservant interpret as vagueness and which Leamas seemed to acquire with unnatural speed. He developed small dishonesties, borrowed insignificant sums from secretaries and neglected to return them, arrived late or left early under some mumbled pretext. At first his colleagues treated him with indulgence; perhaps his decline scared them in the same way as we are scared by cripples, beggars, and invalids because we fear we could ourselves become them; but in the end his neglect, his brutal, unreasoning malice isolated him.

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 20

### Explanation and Analysis

Although it is not yet clear exactly what Leamas's mission will be, the novel shows him going into a precipitous decline immediately after Control has told him to begin to act like the Circus is treating him badly. He acts like a resentful, angry man and drinks huge quantities of alcohol, assuming a demeanor which (it later turns out) Control believes will

lead Communist spies to target him as a possible defector. For Leamas, playing this role comes naturally. The “real” Leamas is only a bit less rude and hard-drinking than his act requires. His memory lapses are likely feigned, as Leamas in reality has a very good memory, but his isolation from other people is hardly feigned at all. Leamas fears intimacy, both because it could cause his mission to go awry and because he fears the emotional toll losing someone close to him would take on him.

### Chapter 4 Quotes

☛ He shook his head. "Sorry, Liz, you've got it wrong. I don't like Americans and public schools. I don't like military parades and people who play soldiers." Without smiling he added, "And I don't like conversations about Life."

"But, Alec, you might as well say—"

"I should have added," Leamas interrupted, "that I don't like people who tell me what I ought to think."

She knew he was getting angry but she couldn't stop herself anymore. "That's because you don't *want* to think, you don't dare! There's some poison in your mind, some hate. You're a fanatic, Alec. I know you are, but I don't know what about.

You're a fanatic who doesn't want to convert people, and that's a dangerous thing. You're like a man who's . . . sworn vengeance or something." The brown eyes rested on her. When he spoke she was frightened by the menace in his voice.

"If I were you," he said roughly, "I'd mind my own business."

**Related Characters:** Liz Gold, Alec Leamas (speaker)

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 31-32

### Explanation and Analysis

Liz is Leamas's colleague at the library, and she has begun to invite him over for dinner. Although he does not say much, Liz likes him and has begun to try to understand his personality. Liz is about to tell Leamas that she is a member of the Communist Party, but first she asks him what he believes in.

Leamas's response reveals his dedication to the practical elements of life and his dislike for symbols of ideologies and privilege. (Notably, in England, “public schools” are what Americans call private schools: they are exclusive institutions that enroll rich members of the upper-class.) Leamas believes that life is dangerous and inexplicably cruel and that thinking about which principles explain how the world works is a waste of time.

Liz's answer reveals both how little Leamas has told her and how much she has intuited about him. Although Leamas has told Liz nothing about himself, she guesses correctly that he is on a mission for revenge. He hopes to revenge himself against Mundt for the deaths of his agents. There is also truth to Liz's claim that Leamas does not dare to think. While Leamas considers such philosophical thought useless, there is also probably a part of him that finds it too frightening to look deeply at his own actions and those of his government. Liz's scrutiny makes Leamas uncomfortable and angry, not only because he is scared to give his own life real thought, but because he believes that telling her anything will compromise his mission.

## Chapter 5 Quotes

☝ He hardly spoke at supper, and she watched him, her fear growing until she could bear it no more and she cried out suddenly:  
 "Alec . . . oh, Alec . . . what is it? Is it good-bye?"  
 He got up from the table, took her hands, and kissed her in a way he'd never done before and spoke to her softly for a long time, told her things she only dimly understood, only half heard because all the time she knew it was the end and nothing mattered any more.

**Related Characters:** Liz Gold (speaker), Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 37-38

### Explanation and Analysis

Liz has been taking care of Leamas, who has stopped coming to the library without giving notice, and whom she found sick in bed in his apartment a week before. On this night, when she arrives, she sees that there are certain things missing from the apartment and that he has showered but not shaved his face. Liz has always been able to intuit that Leamas has something on his mind that he will not or cannot tell her about. Now she knows some crucial juncture has been reached, and although she knows he doesn't want to talk about it, cannot help but ask him.

Leamas has tried to stay away from what he saw as a dangerous emotional connection, and has tried to keep total secrecy about his mission, but he breaks with his usual reserved manner in response to Liz's outpouring of emotion. He is more openly affectionate and caring, perhaps because he knows that they will not see each other for a long time, but hopes to be able to come back to her. Notably, the novel does not reveal exactly what Leamas told Liz.

Regardless of whether he has betrayed any secrets to her, given his fear of compromising his work because of intimacy, this scene is likely to come back to haunt and worry him. Although it is unclear how much Leamas tells Liz, it is sure that he will wonder if he told her too much.

## Chapter 6 Quotes

☝ "How very distressing; and nobody to look after you, of course."  
 There was a very long silence.  
 "You know she's in the Party, don't you?" Control asked quietly.  
 "Yes," Leamas replied. Another silence. "I don't want her brought into this."  
 "Why should she be?" Control asked sharply and for a moment, just for a moment, Leamas thought he had penetrated the veneer of academic detachment. "Who suggested she should be?"  
 "No one," Leamas replied, "I'm just making the point. I know how these things go—all offensive operations. They have by-products, take sudden turns in unexpected directions. You think you've caught one fish and you find you've caught another. I want her kept clear of it."  
 "Oh, quite, quite."  
 "Who's that man in the Labour Exchange—Pitt? Wasn't he in the Circus during the war?"  
 "I know no one of that name. Pitt, did you say?"  
 "Yes."  
 "No, not a name to me. In the Labour Exchange?"  
 "Oh, for God's sake," Leamas muttered audibly.

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas, Control (speaker), Mr. Pitt, Liz Gold

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 48-49

### Explanation and Analysis

Leamas has been approached by Communist spies who wish to recruit him to their side and defect, but before he starts this part of his mission, he goes to check in with Control one more time, meeting him at Smiley's house and taking care to lose anyone who might be tailing him. During this conversation, Control lets Leamas know that he is aware of Leamas's relationship with Liz, likely because he had Leamas watched, perhaps by Smiley. Control probably brings up Liz and Leamas's relationship to plant doubt in Leamas's mind and cause him to wonder whether he revealed too much to Liz, compromising the mission.

Control reacts sharply to Leamas's suggestion that Liz

would be brought into the operation, and then acts completely clueless when Leamas asks if Pitt, the man who got him the job at the library with Liz, is working for the Circus. It does not occur to Leamas at the time to wonder why Control reacts so strongly to his very reasonable request that Liz be kept out of the operation. Nor does he think to question why Control acts so entirely clueless about who Pitt is, although it seems inconsistent that Control knows about Leamas's relationship with Liz, but remains unaware of the person at the employment agency who helped Leamas find a job. This moment foreshadows that Control is planning to betray Leamas and is worried that someone (Smiley, perhaps) has told Leamas what he is planning. In fact, as it is revealed later, Pitt was planted at the Labour Exchange expressly so that he could send Leamas to work at the library, where he would meet Liz, a member of the Communist party.

## Chapter 7 Quotes

☝️ Tactically, he reflected, they're right to rush it. I'm on my uppers, prison experience still fresh, social resentment strong. I'm an old horse, I don't need breaking in; I don't have to pretend they've offended my honour as an English gentleman. On the other hand they would expect *practical* objections. They would expect him to be afraid; for his Service pursued traitors as the eye of God followed Cain across the desert. And finally, they would know it was a gamble. They would know that inconsistency in human decision can make nonsense of the best-planned espionage approach; that cheats, liars, and criminals may resist every blandishment while respectable gentlemen have been moved to appalling treasons by watery cabbage in a Departmental canteen.

**Related Characters:** Sam Kiever, Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 59-60

### Explanation and Analysis

Leamas is meeting with Kiever, a Communist spy who, in only slightly veiled language, explains to Leamas what he can expect to be paid if he defects and tells the Communists all that he knows. Leamas is a little taken aback by Kiever's directness, but then he tries to put himself in the position of the other man, who is, after all, a spy just like himself. He thinks about how he must seem to Kiever: he seems like an ideal candidate to defect, because he has just spent several months in prison and has no money. He already seems like a desperate man with nothing to lose, so it makes sense to

him that Kiever would try to appeal directly to his need for money. Leamas and Kiever also know that human beings are unpredictable, and even though Leamas seems like an ideal defector, he may be absolutely opposed to the idea.

## Chapter 8 Quotes

☝️ Leamas was sweating. Peters watched him coolly, appraising him like a professional gambler across the table. What was Leamas worth? What would break him, what attract or frighten him? What did he hate, above all, what did he know? Would he keep his best card to the end and sell it dear? Peters didn't think so; Leamas was too much off balance to monkey about. He was a man at odds with himself, a man who knew one life, one confession, and had betrayed them. Peters had seen it before. He had seen it, even in men who had undergone a complete ideological rehearsal, who in the secret hours of the night had found a new creed, and alone, compelled by the internal power of their convictions, had betrayed their calling, their families, their countries. Even they, filled as they were with new zeal and new hope, had had to struggle against the stigma of treachery; even they wrestled with the almost physical anguish of saying that which they had been trained never, never to reveal. Like apostates who feared to burn the Cross, they hesitated between the instinctive and the material; and Peters, caught in the same polarity, must give them comfort and destroy their pride.

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas, Peters

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 72-73

### Explanation and Analysis

Leamas has agreed to defect and has flown to the Netherlands to tell an interrogator everything he knows about the Circus. In the same way that, in the previous chapter, Leamas assessed what Kiever must be thinking, Peters now assesses Leamas's psychology. Peters seems to have no doubts that Leamas is a real defector; he only wonders how to get Leamas to embrace that status fully and reveal everything he knows. Peters reflects on the two kinds of defectors: those who betray their spy services out of desperation, like Leamas seems to be doing, and those who do it because they decide that they believe in the other side's ideology. For both types of defectors, the process of revealing their organization's secrets is emotionally wrenching and difficult. Even though the defector who switches sides for ideological reasons may think that what he or she is doing is justified, the indoctrination into a spy

service is so thorough that it is difficult for the spy-turned-defector to reveal its secrets.

## Chapter 9 Quotes

☛ "I was head of the Berlin set-up, wasn't I? I'd have been in on it. A high-level agent in East Germany would have to be run from Berlin. I'd have known." Leamas got up, went to the sideboard, and poured himself some whisky. He didn't bother about Peters.

"You said yourself there were special precautions, special procedures in this case. Perhaps they didn't think you needed to know."

"Don't be bloody silly," Leamas rejoined shortly; "of course I'd have known." This was the point he would stick to through thick and thin; it made them feel they knew better, gave credence to the rest of his information. "They will want to deduce *in spite of you*," Control had said. "We must give them the material and remain sceptical to their conclusions. Rely on their intelligence and conceit, on their suspicion of one another—that's what we must do."

**Related Characters:** Peters, Alec Leamas (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 90

### Explanation and Analysis

Leamas has been telling Peters about Rolling Stone, a secret operation used to pay an extremely important spy. Peters suggests that the spy being paid may have been an East German, but Leamas rejects this idea, saying that as the head of Berlin station, he would have known about every spy the British had working in the region. This is, in fact, what Leamas really believes. He thinks that there was no other spy, but that he must create the suspicion that an East German was working for the British. The plan, as far as Leamas understands it, is that suspicion will eventually fall on Mundt, who is one of the heads of the German spy service. By refusing to give any credence to his interrogator's suggestion that there could have been a spy that he did not know about, Leamas retains the air of a spy who is betraying the Circus, but doing so honestly, giving a consistent picture of what he believes to have occurred.

## Chapter 10 Quotes

☛☛ This wasn't part of the bargain; this was different. What the hell was he supposed to do? By pulling out now; by refusing to go along with Peters, he was wrecking the operation. It was just possible that Peters was lying, that this was the test—all the more reason that he should agree to go. But if he went, if he agreed to go east, to Poland, Czechoslovakia, or God knows where, there was no good reason why they should ever let him out—there was no good reason (since he was notionally a wanted man in the West) why he should *want* to be let out. Control had done it—he was sure. The terms had been too generous, he'd known that all along. They didn't throw money about like that for nothing—not unless they thought they might lose you. Money like that was a *douceur* for discomfort and dangers Control would not openly admit to. Money like that was a warning; Leamas had not heeded the warning.

**Related Characters:** Peters, Control, Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 93

### Explanation and Analysis

Peters has told Leamas that there are wanted ads printed in the newspapers, calling for information leading to Leamas's arrest. This means that Leamas must stay with his Communist handlers for now, because his passport will soon expire and he will be arrested upon his return to England. Although Leamas accuses Peters of having had Ashe or Kiever tell the Circus that he had defected to have more leverage over him, deep down he knows that Control was responsible for this. He realized that Control did not tell him everything about this mission, but Leamas had hoped that those secrets had been trivial ones. He could imagine that Control kept things from him to assure that he would react convincingly when told something surprising, or otherwise to better play the role of the defector. Now he begins to think that Control may have had an altogether different plan in mind than the one he described to Leamas. He does not believe that there could be any change to the ultimate mission (killing Mundt), but wonders if Control offered him a large reward for taking the mission because he believed that Leamas might never be able to return to collect it.

## Chapter 11 Quotes

☛ They'd talked about it in the meeting of her party branch. George Hanby, the branch treasurer, had actually been passing Ford the grocer's as it happened, he hadn't seen much because of the crowd, but he'd talked to a bloke who'd seen the whole thing. Hanby had been so impressed that he'd rung the *Worker*, and they'd sent a man to the trial—that was why the *Worker* had given it a middle page spread as a matter of fact. It was just a straight case of protest—of sudden social awareness and hatred against the boss class, as the *Worker* said. This bloke that Hanby spoke to (he was just a little ordinary chap with specs, white collar type) said it had been so sudden—spontaneous was what he meant—and it just proved to Hanby once again how incendiary was the fabric of the capitalist system. Liz had kept very quiet while Hanby talked: none of them knew, of course, about her and Leamas. She realised then that she hated George Hanby; he was a pompous, dirty-minded little man, always leering at her and trying to touch her.

**Related Characters:** Ford the Grocer, George Hanby, George Smiley, Alec Leamas, Liz Gold

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 99

**Explanation and Analysis**

Liz misses Leamas and has continued to turn over the incident with Ford the grocer in her mind. Although Liz does not understand Leamas's motivations for hitting Ford, she believes that Leamas intended to hit him because of the way he spoke to her the day before the fight, when Leamas made it clear that he would be going away. It is obvious to Liz that the ideologically based explanation given in the *Worker* is incorrect. Although this clearly undermines her sense of the ability to explain every event in terms of the Communist ideology, Liz directs her disillusionment towards Hanby, not towards Communism as a whole. The Communist interpretation does have some grounding in the truth, however. It is true that the situation with Ford is yet another one in which the role Leamas plays and his actual personality are not very far apart. Leamas does, after all, despise unearned privilege and those who look down at him.

The little man in spectacles is most likely George Smiley, sent by Control to make sure that the incident between Leamas and Ford gets picked up by the newspapers. This small detail confirms Leamas's suspicion in the preceding chapters that there are elements of the plan that were never shared with him, although it is still unclear to what extent this is the case.

## Chapter 12 Quotes

☛ He drove seventy kilometres in half an hour, weaving between the traffic, taking risks to beat the clock, when a small car, a Fiat probably, nosed its way out into the fast lane forty yards ahead of him. Leamas stamped on the brake, turning his headlights full on and sounding his horn, and by the grace of God he missed it; missed it by a fraction of a second. As he passed the car he saw out of the corner of his eye four children in the back, waving and laughing, and the stupid, frightened face of their father at the wheel. He drove on, cursing, and suddenly it happened; suddenly his hands were shaking feverishly, his face was burning, his heart palpitating wildly. He managed to pull off the road into a lay-by, scrambled out of the car, and stood breathing heavily, staring at the hurtling stream of giant lorries. He had a vision of the little car caught among them, pounded and smashed, until there was nothing left, nothing but the frenetic whine of klaxons and the blue lights flashing; and the bodies of the children, torn, like the murdered refugees on the road across the dunes.

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 104-105

**Explanation and Analysis**

Leamas is on the plane to Berlin, where Peters is bringing him to get away from the British police who are searching for him. Leamas is uncertain of what is to come and how the mission will progress, and he feels scared. He remembers when he first noticed this kind of emotional fragility occurring during his work, and thinks back on a past frantic ride on a highway to try to get to a meeting with Riembeck. In his rush, he nearly hit a car full of children. That close call triggered a fear that Leamas usually suppresses: the fear that he will hurt or kill someone in the course of doing his job. It also brought back a flashback of the horrible bombing of refugees that Leamas witnessed during the war. The lorries—large, fast-moving machines similar to the planes which dropped the bombs—come to symbolize the possibility that innocent people may be killed, not necessarily by him, but perhaps as an effect of his work. Leamas hopes that the work he does will protect innocent people, and it is clear that he could not live with himself if he felt like he put a civilian in harm's way.

## Chapter 13 Quotes

☝☝ The qualities he exhibited to Fiedler, the restless uncertainty, the protective arrogance concealing shame, were not approximations but extensions of qualities he actually possessed; hence also the slight dragging of the feet, the aspect of personal neglect, the indifference to food, and an increasing reliance on alcohol and tobacco. When alone, he remained faithful to these habits. He would even exaggerate them a little, mumbling to himself about the iniquities of his Service. Only very rarely, as now, going to bed that evening, did he allow himself the dangerous luxury of admitting the great lie he lived.

**Related Characters:** Fiedler, Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 130

### Explanation and Analysis

Leamas has been living at the lodge with Fiedler, who is trying to draw out every bit of information about the Circus that he can from Leamas. Leamas believes himself to be playing the role of the paid defector, just as he and Control conceived of it. But, in fact, Leamas was an unhealthy, depressive, alcoholic man before he began to pretend to be one, and he is only sinking deeper into that state as he exaggerates these qualities for Fiedler's benefit. It is easier to live without thinking about who he truly is, because there is a very real possibility he will never be able to return to England and will need either to continue to play the role of defector for the rest of his life or face the consequences of being caught lying to the East German security services.

## Chapter 14 Quotes

☝☝ "I've thought about it night and day. Ever since Viereck was shot, I've asked for a reason. At first it seemed fantastic. I told myself I was jealous, that the work was going to my head, that I was seeing treachery behind every tree; we get like that, people in our world. But I couldn't help myself, Leamas, I had to work it out. There'd been other things before. He was afraid—he was afraid that we would catch one who would talk too much!"

"What are you saying? You're out of your mind," said Leamas, and his voice held a trace of fear.

"It all held together, you see. Mundt escaped so easily from England; you told me yourself he did. And what did Guillam say to you? He said they didn't want to catch him! Why not? I'll tell you why—he was their man; they turned him, they caught him, don't you see, and that was the price of his freedom—that and the money he was paid."

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas, Fiedler (speaker), Peter Guillam, Hans-Dieter Mundt

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 139

### Explanation and Analysis

Fiedler has heard from the bank in Copenhagen that the money Leamas put into the joint account as part of Rolling Stone has been withdrawn—and he has figured out that Mundt traveled to Copenhagen during the same period when the money was withdrawn. Now, Fiedler explains to Leamas that this is only the last confirmation he needed for his suspicion that Mundt is spying for the British. He describes interrogating his own motivations, wondering if he was thinking it through wrong. But, eventually, the conclusion that Mundt has betrayed the Abteilung makes too much sense to him to be ignored. Fiedler has seen Mundt's constant killing of suspected spies as counterproductive to their shared mission to gain information about those spying in East Germany, but now he understands that Mundt had to kill those suspects to keep them from ever being interrogated and revealing his own role as a spy. More importantly, Fiedler sees Mundt's escape from London in 1959 as a clear indication that he was not acting alone, but was permitted to leave the country only after agreeing to spy for the British. Fiedler understands that England, like East Germany, is vigilantly pursuing spies and traitors, so it simply does not make sense that a single man like Mundt would be able to outsmart and escape the British secret service.

## Chapter 15 Quotes

☝☝ She had reservations about Germans, that was true. She knew, she had been told, that West Germany was militarist and revanchist, and that East Germany was democratic and peaceloving. But she doubted whether all the good Germans were on one side and all the bad ones on the other. And it was the bad ones who had killed her father. Perhaps that was why the Party had chosen her—as a generous act of reconciliation. Perhaps that was what Ashe had had in mind when he asked her all those questions. Of course—that was the explanation. She was suddenly filled with a feeling of warmth and gratitude towards the Party. They really were decent people and she was proud and thankful to belong.

**Related Characters:** Liz Gold (speaker), Ashe

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 145

### Explanation and Analysis

Liz has been invited to travel to East Germany to exchange experiences with Communists there. She has her reservations, including a feeling of distrust for Germans left over from the War. While the novel never specifies how Liz's father was killed, or if he died because he was a Jew or because he was a British soldier fighting the Nazis, it is clear that Liz's life has been shaped by the tragedy of losing her father as a young woman. It is perhaps partially because of this loss that Liz joined the Communist Party. Slogans promising the pursuit of world peace hold the greatest appeal to her, and she understands the invitation to visit Germany as a kind of olive branch extended in an attempt to reconcile old enemies. It does not occur to Liz that she, a Communist, is being summoned as part of a new struggle between England and East Germany.

## Chapter 17 Quotes

☝☝ Mundt's appearance was fully consistent with his temperament. He looked an athlete. His fair hair was cut short. It lay matt and neat. His young face had a hard, clean line, and a frightening directness; it was barren of humour or fantasy. He looked young but not youthful; older men would take him seriously. He was well built. His clothes fitted him because he was an easy man to fit. Leamas found no difficulty in recalling that Mundt was a killer. There was a coldness about him, a rigorous self-sufficiency which perfectly equipped him for the business of murder. Mundt was a very hard man.

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas, Hans-Dieter Mundt

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 155

### Explanation and Analysis

Leamas and Fiedler have been arrested from the lodge and Leamas has been beaten. Leamas is now about to be interrogated by Mundt. The description of Mundt is consistent with a stereotypical Nazi: he is described as seeming powerful and menacing because of his athleticism, his clean and well-groomed appearance, his blonde hair. Although the Nazis lost the war, Mundt represents their continued ability to succeed in a society that continues to recognize them as the elite. In looking at Mundt, Leamas

draws a connection between members of the elite and the ability to kill without compunction. Mundt, Leamas knows, sees many other types of people as inferior and is thus easily able to justify their killing to himself.

## Chapter 18 Quotes

☝☝ "But what I mean is this: suppose you had done that, suppose it were true—I am taking an example, you understand, a hypothesis, would you kill a man, an innocent man—"  
"Mundt's a killer himself."

"Suppose he wasn't. Suppose it were me they wanted to kill: would London do it?"

"It depends . . . it depends on the need . . ."

"Ah," said Fiedler contentedly, "it depends on the need. Like Stalin, in fact. The traffic accident and the statistics. That is a great relief."

"Why?"

"You must get some sleep," said Fiedler. "Order what food you want. They will bring you whatever you want. Tomorrow you can talk." As he reached the door he looked back and said, "We're all the same, you know, that's the joke."

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas, Fiedler (speaker), Hans-Dieter Mundt

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 161-162

### Explanation and Analysis

Fiedler and Leamas have been rescued from prison, where Mundt tried to force them to confess that they were conspiring to make the East Germans believe he was a British spy, so that the East Germans would execute him. Of course, this is exactly what Leamas believes he was sent on a mission to do. But Fiedler, who truly believes that Mundt is a British spy, wonders if it is possible that the British have gone one step further. Although he does not put this clearly to Leamas, he wonders if the British would seek to get Fiedler killed, because Fiedler suspects Mundt of being their spy. Leamas does not quite follow Fiedler's suggestion, but he knows that his spy service would sacrifice the life of an innocent East German to advance their mission. For Fiedler, this admission should be alarming: it means that he could be in danger. But Fiedler is truly interested in the differences between the two ideologies: he finds it darkly amusing to learn that the British are no less brutal than the East Germans when it comes to pursuing their ends.

## Chapter 20 Quotes

“Riemeck had no car himself, he could not have followed de Jong from his house in West Berlin. There was only one way he could have known—through the agency of our own Security police, who reported de Jong’s presence as a matter of routine as soon as the car passed the Inter Sector checkpoint. That knowledge was available to Mundt, and Mundt made it available to Riemeck. *That* is the case against Hans-Dieter Mundt—I tell you, Riemeck was his creature, the link between Mundt and his imperialist masters!”

Fiedler paused, then added quietly:

“Mundt-Riemeck-Leamas: that was the chain of command, and it is axiomatic of intelligence technique the whole world over that each link of the chain be kept, as far as possible, in ignorance of the others. Thus it is right that Leamas should maintain he knows nothing to the detriment of Mundt: that is no more than the proof of good security by his masters in London.”

**Related Characters:** Fiedler (speaker), Alec Leamas, Karl Riemeck, Hans-Dieter Mundt

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 178

**Explanation and Analysis**

Fiedler is presenting to the Tribunal the case that Mundt was a British agent. Fiedler claims that the way Riemeck made contact with De Jong—tracking him down in a forest—could only have been possible with Mundt to facilitate it. The picture Fiedler paints is one in which Leamas is not the leader of British intelligence in East Germany, but the most dispensable part of the chain. In Fiedler’s view, while Leamas was unaware that Mundt was working for the British, Riemeck knew about Mundt’s role. This suggests that, whereas Leamas believed he oversaw the Berlin station, his agent actually knew more than he did. He was not the superior, but merely the final messenger, passing on information without even understanding its origin.

## Chapter 21 Quotes

“Comrade Mundt took one precaution while the British, with Fiedler’s aid, planned his murder.

“He caused scrupulous enquiries to be made in London. He examined every tiny detail of that double life which Leamas led in Bayswater. He was looking, you see, for some human error in a scheme of almost superhuman subtlety. Somewhere, he thought, in Leamas’ long sojourn in the wilderness, he would have to break faith with his oath of poverty, drunkenness, degeneracy, above all of solitude. He would need a companion, a mistress perhaps; he would long for the warmth of human contact, long to reveal a part of the other soul within his breast. Comrade Mundt was right you see. Leamas, that skilled, experienced operator, made a mistake so elementary, so human that . . .”

**Related Characters:** Karden (speaker), Hans-Dieter Mundt, Liz Gold, Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 183-184

**Explanation and Analysis**

Karden, Mundt’s attorney, is presenting the defense at the Tribunal. He will seek to show that Leamas was sent by the British to frame Mundt as a British spy, to eliminate the Abteilung’s most valuable employee. To that end, he describes Leamas in the way Leamas would describe himself: he says that Leamas pretended to be a degenerate, solitary drunk to tempt the East Germans to recruit him as a defector. He also suggests that Leamas committed a single error, by opening himself up to another person, which will prove to be Liz. He even uses the same language that Control does, referring to the “warmth” of connection with other people in opposition to the emotionally strenuous isolation of the spy on an undercover mission.

## Chapter 22 Quotes

“Liz hated having her back to the court; she wished she could turn and see Leamas, see his face perhaps; read in it some guidance, some sign telling her how to answer. She was becoming frightened for herself; these questions which proceeded from charges and suspicions of which she knew nothing. They must know she wanted to help Alec, that she was afraid, but no one helped her—why would no one help her?”

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas, Liz Gold

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 191

### Explanation and Analysis

Liz has been called as the surprise witness in the Tribunal against Mundt. She is being asked questions that will lead her to contradict Leamas's testimony, which she was not in the courtroom to hear. She realizes that something important is at stake and that Leamas is upset, but no matter how hard she tries, cannot intuit whether to lie or tell the truth. She does not understand the significance of her answers, but knows only that they have significance.

Liz is a Communist, and she has been instructed that answering Karden's questions honestly will "help the cause of Socialism." Nonetheless, Liz wants only to help Leamas. She sees that the Party has tricked her into coming to East Germany to bring some harm to Leamas, and her loyalty immediately goes to him.

☛ London must have gone raving mad. He'd told them—that was the joke—he'd told them to leave her alone. And now it was clear that from the moment, the very moment he left England—before that, even, as soon as he went to prison—some bloody fool had gone round tidying up—paying the bills, settling the grocer, the landlord; above all, Liz. It was insane, fantastic. What were they trying to do—kill Fiedler, kill their agent? Sabotage their own operation? Was it just Smiley—had his wretched little conscience driven him to this? There was only one thing to do—get Liz and Fiedler out of it and carry the can. He was probably written off anyway. If he could save Fiedler's skin—if he could do that—perhaps there was a chance that Liz would get away.

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas (speaker), George Smiley, Fiedler, Liz Gold

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 197

### Explanation and Analysis

Liz has testified that Smiley visited her at her house and sent her money after Leamas went away, although this is exactly what Leamas asked Control to avoid. Leamas is stunned by Liz's testimony and cannot yet interpret it accurately. Instead of seeing that Control never intended to follow through with the agreed-upon plan, Leamas believes

that the plan was bungled by Smiley out of unnecessary sentimentality. He does not realize that Control intended for this outcome: for him to take the stand and be discredited in an East German court to dispel suspicion surrounding Mundt and frame Fiedler, the source of that suspicion. Leamas cannot face the painful and humiliating truth that he was never a key operator sent to take down Mundt, but someone so easily duped and disposable to the Circus, that Control did not hesitate to put him in harm's way.

## Chapter 23 Quotes

☛ Fiedler, who had returned to his chair and was listening with rather studied detachment, looked at Leamas blandly for a moment:

"And you messed it all up, Leamas, is that it?" he asked. "An old dog like Leamas, engaged in the crowning operation of his career, falls for a . . . what did you call her? . . . a frustrated little girl in a crackpot library? London must have known; Smiley couldn't have done it alone." Fiedler turned to Mundt: "Here's an odd thing, Mundt; they must have known you'd check up on every part of his story. That was why Leamas lived the life. Yet afterwards they sent money to the grocer, paid up the rent; and they bought the lease for the girl. Of all the extraordinary things for them to do . . . people of their experience . . . to pay a thousand pounds, to a girl—to a member of the Party—who was supposed to believe he was broke. Don't tell me Smiley's conscience goes that far. London must have done it. What a risk!"

**Related Characters:** Fiedler (speaker), George Smiley, Hans-Dieter Mundt, Liz Gold, Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 202

### Explanation and Analysis

Liz has been called to testify at the Tribunal, and Leamas believes that his plot to frame Mundt has been uncovered. Fiedler, on the other hand, sees that the money sent to Liz indicates that the British wished to foil Leamas's plot to frame Mundt. He now understands that although Leamas may think his mission was to frame Mundt, the British meant for Leamas's mission to be exposed, since the proof that the British had tried to frame Mundt would dispel suspicion that Mundt was a British agent. Leamas still does not understand that Control hid from him that the actual purpose of the mission was not to get Mundt killed, but to protect him.

Control was just as careful to plant evidence for Leamas as he was about planting evidence for the judges on the Tribunal. Leamas's great fear has always been that a connection with another person would make him vulnerable, foolish, and incapable of carrying out his mission. Control exploited that fear by creating the impression that Leamas ruined the mission by starting an affair with Liz, when, in fact, Leamas was sent to work with Liz in the hopes that he would start an affair with her.

## Chapter 24 Quotes

☝☝ "As for the Jew," she continued, "he made an accusation against a loyal comrade."  
 "Will they shoot Fiedler for that?" asked Liz incredulously.  
 "Jews are all the same," the woman commented. "Comrade Mundt knows what to do with Jews. We don't need their kind here. If they join the Party they think it belongs to them. If they stay out, they think it is conspiring against them. It is said that Leamas and Fiedler plotted against Mundt. Are you going to eat that?" she enquired, indicating the food on the desk. Liz shook her head.

**Related Characters:** Liz Gold, The Prison Wardress (speaker), Hans-Dieter Mundt, Fiedler, Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 206

### Explanation and Analysis

After testifying to the Tribunal, Liz is being held by the Prison Wardress. The Prison Wardress has explained that Leamas will be executed for killing a guard, while Fiedler will die for accusing Mundt of spying for the British. There are several ways in which Liz's interaction with the Wardress show her the Communist Party's shortcomings.

First of all, it is not enough for Mundt to be acquitted—Fiedler must also be executed for having brought the case against Mundt. This shows how small a premium is placed on life, especially the life of minorities, in the Communist system. The process was clearly swayed by anti-Semitism, especially since Fiedler was right about Mundt's guilt and even provided coherent evidence of it.

The Wardress sees herself as a dedicated Communist, but her actions and beliefs are based on prejudices and hatred. She shows Liz the way that an ideology that Liz believes in can be twisted or laid aside when convenient to justify bigotry.

## Chapter 25 Quotes

☝☝ "But what about Fiedler—don't you feel anything for him?"  
 "This is a war," Leamas replied. "It's graphic and unpleasant because it's fought on a tiny scale, at close range; fought with a wastage of innocent life sometimes, I admit. But it's nothing, nothing at all besides other wars—the last or the next."  
 "Oh God," said Liz softly. "You don't understand. You don't want to. You're trying to persuade yourself. It's far more terrible, what they are doing; to find the humanity in people, in me and whoever else they use, to turn it like a weapon in their hands, and use it to hurt and kill ..."

**Related Characters:** Alec Leamas, Liz Gold (speaker), Fiedler

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 217

### Explanation and Analysis

Liz and Leamas are driving away from the prison, after Mundt has freed them. Leamas has explained to Liz what he has realized: although he had believed he was being sent on a mission to take down Mundt, his mission's actual purpose was to kill Fiedler to protect Mundt.

When talking to Fiedler, Leamas refused to explain how he justifies the immoral acts required of spies, since he does not have any ideological justification. He also shook off Liz's earlier questions about his beliefs. But now he finally explains himself. Leamas witnessed a great deal of carnage during World War II, and his hope is that by fighting the dirty fight between two opposing spy agencies as part of a Cold War struggle, he will do his part to avert another massive war fought between armies. He thinks it is uglier to witness the deaths of people one knows, instead of many strangers, but in the end Fiedler's death is worth it, if it helps to prevent the coming of another World War.

Liz, on the other hand, has come to believe that spies' methods make them worse than soldiers. Instead of using guns and bombs, spies take people's feelings for one another and use those to manipulate and control people. To her mind, this immoral method is not justified no matter what the end.

## Chapter 26 Quotes

Shielding his eyes he looked down at the foot of the wall and at last he managed to see her, lying still. For a moment he hesitated, then quite slowly he climbed back down the same rungs, until he was standing beside her. She was dead; her face was turned away, her black hair drawn across her cheek as if to protect her from the rain.

They seemed to hesitate before firing again; someone shouted an order, and still no one fired. Finally they shot him, two or three shots. He stood glaring round him like a blinded bull in the arena. As he fell, Leamas saw a small car smashed between great lorries, and the children waving cheerfully through the window.

**Related Characters:** Liz Gold, Alec Leamas

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:**   

**Page Number:** 225

### Explanation and Analysis

In the novel's last lines, Liz has just been shot by snipers as Leamas tries to pull her up over the Berlin Wall to safety on the western side. Leamas understands that Control meant for him to escape alive, but planned for Liz, who was a Communist and a Jew, and who knew too much about the

spy agency's methods, to be killed. This is the final betrayal for Leamas. While he could justify to himself the way the Circus lied to him to persuade him to go on a mission to save Mundt, a man he considered evil, he cannot tolerate Liz's death. He notices the way her hair falls across her face "as if to protect her" in the way that he could not, despite his feeling of intimacy and connection to her. Leamas then decides to die with Liz rather than cross the wall as Control intended. Those who shoot Leamas were likely under orders from Mundt to shoot only Liz, but when Leamas recrosses the wall, they kill him too.

At the moment he dies, Leamas thinks back on a moment referenced earlier in the book, when he first realized that the stress of his job was becoming too much for him. At that moment, driving in a hurry on the highway to see Riembeck, Leamas nearly caused a car full of children to crash. He pulled off the highway and stood thinking about what it would have been like to see that car smashed between two large trucks. In that moment, Leamas worried that his work as a spy, which he had always intended to prevent death like he witnessed during the war, would bring about the death of innocents, like those children. Now, he feels that the innocents of society whom he had spent his life trying to protect will instead be crushed all the same. He sees the Communist and Western systems as cars competing for space on the highway, and innocents like Liz as the smaller car that they crush.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 1: CHECKPOINT

The novel begins at an American checkpoint on the **Berlin Wall**, soon after the barrier's construction in 1961. British secret service agent Alec Leamas has been waiting for nine hours for his agent Karl Riembeck to cross from East Berlin into West Berlin. Alec Leamas tells his impatient American minder—a CIA agent—that he must keep waiting, because his agent is on the run from Mundt. The American wonders aloud how Mundt knows that Riembeck is spying for the British, and Leamas rudely tells him to shut up.

Leamas watches as a car crosses the checkpoint, then goes out to talk to the occupant of the car, a woman named Elvira. She tells Leamas that Riembeck escaped arrest in East Berlin and will try to cross through the **Berlin Wall** tonight at this checkpoint. Leamas is angry that Riembeck has told Elvira so much; she says that Riembeck trusts her and tells her everything.

Leamas reenters the checkpoint hut and apologizes for having been rude, giving some whiskey to two West German policemen who are working there. The CIA agent has left. Leamas asks whether they can shoot to protect an agent on the run, and they say that they've been instructed never to shoot unless the "Vopos" (East German police officers) shoot into the American sector for fear that firing into the East will start a war. Leamas explains that he is awaiting an agent that Mundt's men are pursuing. They tell him there are still places where a person can climb over the **Berlin Wall**, but Leamas says that his man will talk his way out and ride over on a bicycle.

As Leamas waits, he looks out at the **Berlin Wall**, whose ugly design reminds him of a concentration camp seen during **World War II**. He thinks back on the moment, some months before, when he first discovered that Riembeck had confided in Elvira. Riembeck had had a huge success and Control had come to Berlin to meet him. At a bar, afterwards Riembeck had introduced Leamas to his mistress Elvira. Leamas then discovered that Riembeck had shared a lot of information with Elvira, and Leamas trusted him less from then on, only telling him what Riembeck absolutely to know. Now, having heard from Elvira that she knows everything, Leamas swears to himself never to trust an agent again.

*The start of the novel introduces us to Alec Leamas in his normal state of mind: on edge and acting rudely as he waits to see if his agent will escape out of East Germany. Leamas clearly finds this a stressful situation, but at this point, it is unclear whether he is worried about Riembeck's safety out of loyalty to the personal relationship they have developed or merely because Riembeck is important to Leamas's work.*



*Leamas buys into the belief that the spy must avoid human connections that could compromise the mission, and he looks down on Riembeck for compromising their work together by sharing information with a third-party, even one he trusts and loves.*



*Seeing the two German police officers who have stayed on the job instead of leaving impatiently, Leamas has an impulse to reach out to these men and show his solidarity with those who place their jobs above all else, showing loyalty to their duties rather than their personal lives, so he gives them some whisky. Alcohol is clearly an important crutch used by agents to get through stressful, alienating experiences like waiting to see if Riembeck will make it to safety.*



*The Berlin Wall is a symbol of the high tensions between the two sides in the Cold War, and for Leamas it evokes memories of the war he lived through. Leamas sees the secrecy of his work as an important way to prevent the outbreak of another war by keeping the Communists too weak to dare to challenge the West. He sees Riembeck's disclosures to Elvira as creating new and unnecessary weaknesses for the Western side, and he believes that he would never compromise his important mission in this way.*



Leamas, who offered Elvira a place to stay at his flat and told her he would bring Riemeck later, calls to tell his landlady to expect guests that night. One of the policemen interrupts him, saying a man on a bicycle is crossing. Leamas sees that Riemeck has passed through the document check on the Eastern side and now must go through currency and Customs. Riemeck makes it through these checks, then begins to bike towards the line between the **Berlin Wall** between East and West. At that moment, the searchlights go on and a siren begins to wail. Taking care not to shoot into the Western sector, an East German sentry shoots Riemeck, who falls from his bicycle. Leamas hopes to himself that Riemeck is dead.

## CHAPTER 2: THE CIRCUS

Flying back to London from Berlin, Leamas reflects that he has failed in his career and been beaten by Mundt. He knows that his bosses have never liked him, but they did not fire him before because he was effective at his job. He thinks about the man who has beaten him. Mundt had worked as a low-level spy in London before returning to Berlin to become head of operations in the Abteilung (the East German spy service). After that, Leamas's agents began to be killed off, one after another, on Mundt's orders, up until the latest killing of Riemeck.

Leamas is a short, strong man of around fifty who dresses simply. He has a tough, unrefined look, like he could cause trouble and wasn't raised as a member of the British upper class. He divorced his wife, and never sees his teenage children. Leamas is picked up at the airport by a man from Personnel named Fawley, who is a member of the upper class and dislikes Leamas. Leamas asks if he is going to be fired, but Fawley says he should wait to hear from Control (the head of the British secret service).

At the Cambridge "Circus," headquarters for the British spy service, Leamas meets with Control. Control is courteous and complains about banal topics like the **cold** and the secretaries. Control says it's a shame that Riemeck was shot, and says that Elvira must have turned him in. Leamas does not ask Control how he knows about Elvira. Control begins to question Leamas about his personal reactions to the deaths of his agents, and then asks Leamas if he feels burnt out. Leamas says that is up to Control to tell him. Control says that spies live without sympathy "out in the cold," but, even when they are on the job, they cannot always remain so detached. Leamas recalls images of chaos he saw during his service in the Netherlands during **World War II**.

*The Communists suspect Riemeck of spying for the British, and so they kill him, which reflects an ideology that allows for the summary killing of individuals. Leamas hopes that Riemeck is dead for two reasons. First, he knows that if he is not, Riemeck will be interrogated and tortured. For Riemeck's sake, Leamas hopes this won't occur, and for the sake of the West, Leamas hopes that Riemeck is dead and cannot be forced to reveal the secrets he knows to the Communists.*



*Leamas feels that he has let down those who he had pledged to protect: the Western intelligence program, and the many agents he directed during his tenure as the head of the Berlin station. He does not know what will become of him without a network of agents, since he has dedicated his entire life to his career.*



*Leamas, unlike most of the spies who work for the Circus, the British intelligence service, is not highly educated or brought up with impeccable manners. He has no loyalty to a class, and no loyalty to a family. He is used to being treated with some disdain by other members of the Circus like Fawley.*



*Control is a member of the British upper class. When he talks about uncomfortable topics, like the emotional struggles that Leamas may experience while living without any human connection, Control falls back on his upper-class manners to dispel the awkwardness of the topic. But this attitude is unfamiliar to Leamas, who does not trust Control enough to ask him a straightforward question about how Control knows Karl had a mistress, Elvira. Leamas is unused to talking about his own emotions, but they are clearly raw, because talking about the deaths of his agents brings back memories of the war.*



Control says he wants Leamas to “stay out in the **cold** a little longer,” and then begins to talk about the morality of spy work. He says that they justify the wicked things they do through dishonest comparisons of the West’s ideals with the East’s methods. Leamas is bewildered by this philosophizing.

Finally, Control gets to the point: he wants Leamas to stay “out in the **cold**” to help to take out Mundt. Leamas asks why, since they have no other agents to protect in Berlin. Control says that is not quite true, but he does not elaborate. Control asks Leamas whether he drinks a lot, and Leamas says he drinks more than most. Control asks Leamas what he knows about Mundt; Leamas says that he knows that when Mundt was a spy in London he killed one of his agents, the wife of a man from the British Foreign Office. Control says that Mundt is an ex-Hitler Youth, not a principled Communist. Control then tells Leamas to speak to George Smiley, whom Mundt once tried to kill, and Guillam: both men worked on Mundt’s case in London. Control invites Leamas to come to his house for the weekend while his wife is out of town.

Control asks Leamas again if he is not too exhausted to take on the mission. Leamas says he wants to do it, if it means he will get to see Mundt killed. Control asks if Leamas really hates Mundt or if he is just nauseated and depressed by all the suffering and killing he has seen. Leamas does not respond to this, saying only that he wants to get Mundt. Control tells Leamas not to mention his new mission to anyone. In fact, he says, Leamas should act as if the Circus has treated him unfairly.

### CHAPTER 3: DECLINE

Leamas gets put into a job in the Banking department until his contract runs out. The work in Banking is easy but top-secret, perfect for agents about to be retired. No one at the Circus is surprised by this demotion, because although Leamas did good work during **World War II**, he failed in Berlin. Elsie from Accounting spreads the word that Leamas will not get his full pension. Leamas begins to drink a great deal, acts enraged, and borrows money and does not repay it. He looks dirty and, as more and more people avoid him, becomes a solitary. One day he leaves the job without saying goodbye to anyone. Soon after, a rumor spreads that he stole several thousand pounds from Banking Section. Before leaving Leamas had often talked bitterly about the Americans, seeming to hate them more than the Abteilung. After his disappearance, people quickly forget about him.

*Leamas does not think about the irony of using illiberal, immoral methods in the fight to defend a liberal social order. He sees this as a part of spy work for both the Communists and the West and does not care to ponder whether the two sides are really so different.*



*Leamas is being sent on a mission to protect someone from Mundt, but Control does not see it as necessary to explain who this “Special Interest” is. By keeping information like this secret, Control gives himself more power over Leamas. Control does not use many words to describe Mundt, but he suggests that Mundt is not loyal to any particular ideology, only to winning whichever brutal struggle he is fighting. As a man from East Germany, Mundt has shifted from the Nazis to the Communists, pursuing his own career advancement. (The details of Mundt’s time in London and his attempt to kill George Smiley appear in Le Carré’s first novel, Call for the Dead.)*



*Control has given Leamas the first hints of the undercover role he will need to play to go after Mundt. Leamas is going to be asked to play up his alienation, but also to act as if he has been mistreated and is losing his loyalty to the organization he has pledged his life to work for.*



*The novel jumps straight from Control’s first slight hints as to how Leamas should begin to act for his next assignment to the moment when Leamas actually begins to play this role, skipping over the consultation with Peter Guillam and George Smiley that Control invited Leamas to have at his house in Chapter 2. Instead, the chapter begins describing the way Leamas is perceived as he enacts a new, but very plausible role. This grumpy, antisocial, heavy drinking man is not very different from the Leamas introduced in the first two chapters, while stealing seems surprising, but not impossible.*



Leamas moves into a small, shabby flat. He has no money. He first tries working as a manager at a factory, but quits after a week. He tries to sell encyclopedias door to door, but does not sell a single copy. He gets a reputation in the neighborhood as an absentminded, dirty-looking drunk. A woman comes to clean his apartment but quits after a week, and both she and the local bartender tell others that it looks like Leamas's money will soon run out. They warn against giving him credit.

*Leamas acts as though he is a penniless drunk, and he begins to get a reputation throughout his neighborhood as such. He also seems incapable of holding down any kind of job. He shows no desire to get to know his new neighbors, which is partially an aspect of his new persona for the mission, but also part of the way Leamas believes spies must always operate.*



## CHAPTER 4: LIZ

Finally, the Labour Exchange finds Leamas a job at a Library for Psychic Research. Leamas thinks that he knows Mr. Pitt, the man at the Labour Exchange, from the Circus during the **World War II**. At the library, he works for a woman named Miss Crail. His coworker is a tall Jewish woman in her early twenties named Liz Gold. She gives him a friendly greeting. On his first day, Leamas goes to a pub and a grocery store during his lunch break. He comes back smelling like whisky and leaves his grocery bags in the corner, infuriating the controlling Miss Crail. From then on, Miss Crail despises him.

*Leamas once again comes across something mysterious and unexplained when he believes he recognizes Mr. Pitt. Although he is no longer interacting with anyone from the Circus as he plays the role of the irresponsible drunk, there are hints that the Circus may be pulling strings around him in ways he does not notice or understand. If Leamas is right that he recognizes Mr. Pitt, this suggests that Mr. Pitt was planted in the Labour Exchange by the Circus to ensure that Leamas got a specific job. Leamas does not give this too much thought, but readers are clearly meant to take notice.*



After a few weeks, Liz invites Leamas to supper at her house. He is reluctant to go, but does. After that she invites him frequently, although he speaks little. Liz senses that there is something wrong with Leamas and tells him she knows he will leave at some point and she will never see him again. She says that she knows this and promises not to follow him. He looks at her and says that he will tell her when he is going to leave.

*The relationship between Liz and Leamas grows despite his belief that a spy should steer clear of close relationships with people to avoid compromising the mission. Liz senses that there is something Leamas is hiding, but when he responds by promising to let her know when he is about to disappear, he breaks his cover for a moment—a crucial mistake that will come to haunt them both later.*



One night, Liz asks Leamas what he believes in. He puts her off, saying he does not like “conversations about Life.” When she persists, he begins to get angry. She says that she can tell that he is secretly some kind of fanatic or someone who has sworn vengeance. He tells her to mind her own business, but then asks her what she believes. She says she believes in History. Laughing, he asks if she is a Communist. Liz admits that she is, and that night they become lovers. When Leamas leaves at five in the morning, a plump man in a raincoat is standing near Liz's house, but he disappears as Leamas approaches.

*Liz is dedicated to the socialist ideology which says that history is a progression towards a better, fairer, more peaceful society. Leamas is failing to completely resist Liz's attempts to get to know him, but she still doesn't understand his secret, only that he has one. Meanwhile, the man watching for Leamas to leave Liz's apartment is another signal that Leamas's moves are being tracked, or controlled, in ways he does not know about.*



## CHAPTER 5: CREDIT

A week later, Leamas suddenly stops coming to the library. Distressed, Liz wants to go check on him, even though she knows he will not be happy that she is tracking him down. She reflects that he said he would tell her before he left and goes to his flat anyway. At the door of his flat, she hears him groan. She gets a grocer to break down the door and finds him feverish in bed. Afterwards she comes every day for six days, and cooks and cleans and feels she has never been so happy in her life. As they lie in bed together, Leamas grabs Liz's **hair**, and she laughs. She asks him if he loves her. He says he does not believe in fairy tales.

One night Liz gets to his house and finds Leamas dressed, but not shaved. This strikes her as odd. There are also small items like a radio missing from the apartment. They drink a bottle of wine, but Liz senses that something is wrong. She asks him if this is the end. Leamas takes her hands and kisses her in a different way than he ever has before, and tells her things she hardly understands, then bids her goodbye and tells her not to follow him.

The next morning, Leamas goes to the grocer and asks him for credit. He asks rudely, after his groceries are packed into a bag. Ford the grocer says he can only give credit to those who have shown him a bank slip, and Leamas retorts that most of the grocer's customers do not even have bank accounts. When the grocer tries to kick Leamas out of the shop, Leamas punches him twice, fracturing Ford's cheekbone and dislocating his jaw. The incident is written about in the daily press.

## CHAPTER 6: CONTACT

Leamas spends three months in prison after the incident. He makes no friends among the other prisoners. They resent this and try to harass him, but he beats one up with a gardening hoe and is left alone. When Leamas leaves the prison, he is given his belongings back in a paper parcel and given a tip for a job. He takes a bus into London and walks for a long time towards a good, cheap restaurant, enjoying the sunshine.

*When Leamas gets sick and Liz takes care of him, he lets her into his life even more than before. She becomes a part of his daily life and, although he does not say that he loves her or promise her anything, she feels that she loves him and that they have a future together, especially because he makes gestures that suggest real intimacy, like playfully grabbing her hair, which show that there is more to his feelings than he lets on.*



*Although he does not fill her in on the mission he is about to go on, Leamas clearly opens up to Liz more than he ever meant to. She is also in the apartment to notice the odd signals that something is about to change: he has gotten rid of his few more expensive possessions and has gotten out of bed, but seemingly deliberately not shaved. These are important details the reader is meant to pick up on.*



*Leamas does not have a reputation for being creditworthy. Based on the small but strange changes that Liz noticed in Leamas's apartment the night before, it seems likely that punching Ford is a part of the plan that Leamas worked out with Control, not a random action taken in anger.*



*While in prison, Leamas cultivates no personal relationships, sticking strictly to the principle that he should remain solitary to prevent anyone from getting in the way of his mission. He feels some relief from the stress this isolation causes as he gets out of the prison and is able to walk freely through the streets. As is typical of his style, Le Carré skips over or briefly summarizes large events or chunks of time in order to keep the action moving.*



Leamas wants to get rid of the parcel. Although it has his identification card and driver's license in it, he leaves it on a bench and walks away. A man (Ashe) takes the package and calls to him, but Leamas ignores him. The man runs up to him, but Leamas says he will not take the parcel back and asks the man why he has been following him for the last half-hour. The man says that he thought he recognized Leamas from Berlin, where he had borrowed money from him. Leamas thinks that the man is not an amazing liar, but lies decently well. The man introduces himself as Ashe.

Ashe describes the times that he and Leamas spent together in Berlin. They go to lunch, and after listening to Ashe talk for a long time, Leamas says he remembers him. Ashe is a people-pleaser, which brings out the bully in Leamas. Leamas is so rude to him that he feels sure Ashe would not stick around without an ulterior motive. They agree to meet the following day so that Ashe can give Leamas back the money he says he borrowed from him in Berlin.

Leamas watches Ashe leave, then walks around, drinks coffee, jumps on a bus, catches a train, then another train, and then walks for a long time. He gets into a cab at Charring Cross, giving his name to the driver as "Mr. Amies." When he is dropped off at King's Road, Control opens the door. He tells Leamas that Smiley is out. Leamas tells him he was followed by Ashe that morning, then describes hitting Ford, his encounter with Ashe and his time in prison.

Control says that he heard Leamas was ill and that it was a shame he had no one to take care of him. After a long silence, Control asks Leamas if he knows that Liz is a Communist. Leamas says he knows. He warns Control not to involve Liz in any way in the mission. Leamas then asks Control who Pitt from the Labour Exchange is. Control says he knows no man named Pitt, and says no more.

Leamas asks why Smiley isn't at the house, and Control says that Smiley doesn't like the operation. Control asks if Smiley gave Leamas the background on Mundt, and Leamas says he did. Leamas asks if Smiley knows about the "special interest" the operation is meant to protect. Smiley does know, but he has become squeamish about being involved in spy work, Control explains. Leamas asks how Control can be sure the East Germans are on to him and not Czechs or Russians, but Control only says he is sure of it.

*Ashe's ability to quickly come up with a new reason for approaching Leamas, abandoning the excuse that he saw Leamas forget his parcel, strikes Leamas as telling. As a spy playing a role, Leamas recognizes another spy playing a role in the man who approaches him. While Leamas's role calls for acting withdrawn and rude, Ashe's role is to be friendly and draw Leamas in.*



*Leamas is testing Ashe with his rude behavior to make sure that Ashe has really been sent to make contact with him by some outside authority. Once he establishes this, Leamas pretends to believe Ashe's lies. The reader does not yet know what Leamas's plan to take Mundt down entails, but it seems as if Leamas sees Ashe as part of his mission.*



*Leamas makes these elaborate detours to make sure no one is following him. He also gives a false name when he gets a cab, disguising his identity as he makes this trip to Smiley's house. He is going to check in with Control, which does not fit with the role he has been playing of the fired, disaffected ex-spy angry at his old employers.*



*Control does not pry much into Leamas's affair with Liz, only letting him know that he knows about her and is slightly concerned that Leamas has become connected with an ideological "enemy." When Control denies that he sent Pitt, it is another sign that Control is hiding parts of the plan from Leamas.*



*According to Control, Smiley can no longer accept the moral sacrifices that spy work entails. Leamas cannot relate to this lack of loyalty to the Circus: he has undertaken to go on this mission without even knowing who he is meant to protect. At some point, Smiley filled in Leamas about all he knew from his earlier contacts with Mundt, perhaps during the weekend that Leamas spent at Control's home immediately after returning from Berlin (an event not described to the reader).*



Control asks Leamas if he would like anything done for Liz. Leamas says not to give her any money and that he will take care of her when he gets back. Control agrees, saying that it would be dangerous to make contact with Liz now, but then asks again if Leamas wants anything done for her. Leamas asks again that Liz be left alone, and then leaves.

*Leamas wants Liz to be protected from the dangers that come with any involvement in spy work. At the same time, he cannot offer her any support during the rest of his mission, because he knows that this could compromise the mission. His hope is that his affair with Liz will ruin neither her life, nor his mission.*



## CHAPTER 7: KIEVER

Leamas goes to lunch with Ashe the next day, arriving unshaved and smelling of whisky. Ashe gives him a check and they eat a luxurious lunch. Ashe tells Leamas that a friend of his, Sam Kiever, has gotten him some very high-paying work writing articles for foreign newspapers in foreign languages. When Leamas asks no follow-up questions, Ashe asks Leamas what he does, and whether Leamas was “one of the mysterious **cold** warriors” when in Berlin. Leamas blushes and says he was “an office boy for the bloody Yanks.” Ashe says Leamas should meet Sam and that he should come stay at his place.

*Ashe is testing Leamas, seeing how he reacts to the temptations of good food and money. He is also testing Leamas to see whether he will maintain the secrecy he owes to the Circus. Leamas’s response does not fully reveal that he worked for the British secret service, but neither does it deny that he was involved with the Western powers controlling Berlin. Instead, it underlines the impression that Leamas is resentful about his past.*



Ashe brings Leamas back to his apartment, which is generic and hardly decorated. Ashe says Leamas should rest while he goes grocery shopping. When Ashe has left, Leamas makes a phone call. He asks for the secretary of a “Mr. Thomas” and tells her that he is calling on behalf of Mr. Sam Kiever, who has accepted the invitation and hopes to contact Mr. Thomas that evening. Leamas gives the secretary Ashe’s address. Then, after asking some questions at Ashe’s apartment’s reception desk, Leamas takes a nap. He falls asleep wondering what has happened to Liz.

*Leamas follows spy protocols, checking in with the Circus through mysterious channels to let them know the name of the man he is supposed to meet with that night: Sam Kiever. He also does his best to learn more about Ashe’s real identity from the person at the reception desk. Just from looking at the sparse apartment, Leamas guesses that it is not really where Ashe lives, but a place that has been rented expressly so that he can bring Leamas there.*



Ashe returns with Sam Kiever, an older man with a central European accent. They go out for dinner, where Leamas says hostile things about Americans. Afterwards, they go to a strip club. On the way there, Leamas demands to know who will be paying for everything, acting suspicious. Ashe says he will pay, and looks worried. At the club, however, Leamas grabs Ashe’s membership card out of his hand, then pays the guest fee for himself and Kiever. Leamas confronts Ashe, saying that Ashe has been following him since he was released from prison and that both his membership card at the club and his apartment are registered under the name of “Murphy.” Kiever steps in, telling Ashe that he will handle Leamas from here. Ashe leaves.

*Leamas acts suspicious and erratic, then reveals that he has been snooping around, figuring out that Ashe is not really who he says he is and demanding answers for why Ashe has been following him and what he wants. It is not, however, Ashe’s role to reveal this to Leamas, but Kiever’s role. Both Kiever and Ashe are spies sent to play a specific part, although it is not yet clear what they are planning. Throughout, Leamas signals that he is concerned about money, both about having it and about accepting it under false pretenses.*



Kiever tells Leamas that his agency will pay for “factual material” into foreign bank accounts without bothering about taxes. Leamas thinks to himself that “they” are coming on strong now, and that they would know that he had a lot of resentments, but might fear being prosecuted by his Service. He says that he would need a lot of money to agree. Kiever promises him fifteen thousand pounds and another five thousand a year later, and tells him that he will not need to write anything down, but only to tell the “client” what he knows. Kiever tells him the meeting will occur in Holland. Kiever pays the bill and takes Leamas back to another generic-looking apartment. Leamas asks if it is “paid for by the great Worker State,” and Kiever angrily tells him to shut up. The next morning, Kiever gives Leamas a fake passport and they set off.

*Until Leamas asks about the “Worker State” (the U.S.S.R.), the two men speak only in euphemisms, but both understand what is being discussed. Kiever is proposing that Leamas become a defector, promising him money to tell all he knows about the Circus and its operations. As he decides how to react to what Kiever is saying, Leamas ponders what reaction Kiever will expect of him and how he should conform to that expectation or break with it. Leamas is defecting and acting bitter while he does it, but this is most likely part of the plan he hatched with Control and Smiley to eventually take down Mundt.*



## CHAPTER 8: LE MIRAGE

At the airport, Leamas is reminded of the impersonal experience of **World War II**. Kiever has given Leamas luggage, because passengers without luggage always attract attention. When Leamas goes through passport control, the officer there tells him to be careful, because his passport will expire at the end of the month. In a café in the airport, Kiever is rude to a waiter and Leamas tells him he is making a scene, which will make people remember that they were there. On the other end of the trip, passing through Customs at the airport in the Netherlands goes smoothly. As Leamas and Kiever leave the airport, Leamas sees a small, froglike man who looks like a civil servant.

*Leamas spent his wartime service in the Netherlands, and the memory of the war hangs over everything he does sixteen years later. Leamas’s nearly expired passport means that he will be beholden to those around him for new papers to travel back to England, or he may be trapped and more easily controlled by the Communists to whom he is defecting. As there was when Leamas slept with Liz for the first time, there is someone nearby – the small man – who seems to be monitoring Leamas’s actions.*



Leamas and Kiever are picked up by a woman who drives very slowly. Leamas looks around to see where they are going and to try to spot the car he knows must be tailing them. They arrive at a villa near the sea with a sign that says “Le Mirage.” Leamas looks down the road and sees a man in a raincoat getting out. The doorbell rings and a hard-faced man named Peters arrives. Leamas thinks Peters has a Russian accent, but cannot be sure. Kiever bids Leamas goodbye, but Leamas does not shake his hand.

*Leamas senses that many people have been given orders about what to do and how to behave around him. This brings home the seriousness of what he is doing. Leamas will have to make sure that none of these people suspect that his defection is part of a mission and so he sticks to the rude, detached personality he has cultivated.*



Peters and Leamas go into a back room, where Peters makes them both whisky sodas. Leamas says that he doesn’t want Peters to tiptoe around the issue: he is a paid defector. Peters says that Kiever told him that Leamas was a proud man. Leamas tells Kiever that he does not want to wait around for a year in case of follow up questions, because the Circus will figure out that he has defected and come after him. Peters says that they could move him to a safe place behind the Iron Curtain. Leamas proposes that they will need three days to interview him and then will want to refer back to him for a detailed brief. Peter says that this is not necessarily true.

*Leamas has not yet realized, or is pretending not yet to have realized, that he is no longer in control of his own fate. Having supposedly betrayed the Circus, he is not an independent agent—instead, he is beholden to those to whom he defected. A defector needs protection, because he can expect his former employer to try to arrest or kill him. Leamas proposes that he will tell Peters what he knows and then return to England before the Circus notices he is gone. Peters will not give Leamas an answer to this, preferring to keep him in suspense.*



Leamas describes his service during **World War II**. He was enlisted as a soldier when he heard that the special service was recruiting people with language skills. Leamas's father had worked in Holland as a machine tool agent, so Leamas spoke Dutch. Spying in Holland was difficult; his agents were killed as soon as he recruited them. In 1943, he was transferred to Norway, which was much easier. At the end of the war, Leamas left the service and tried to work in other jobs, but by 1949, he was back to the special service, although his pension had been reduced because of his interrupted service.

After lunch, Peters asks Leamas about his service once he returned in 1949. Leamas says that he did desk work until 1951, until the Circus sent him to Berlin as Deputy-Controller of Area in charge of all operational work. In 1959, he recruited Riembeck, who was the best agent he ever had. He was on the Praesidium of the East German Communist Party, a committee that functioned as the country's executive branch. Peters says that Riembeck is dead, and Leamas says he knows, he was there when Riembeck was shot. Leamas says Riembeck was likely killed because he told his mistress Elvira so much.

Leamas tells Peters that he returned to London after Riembeck's death and worked in the Banking sector, supervising overseas payments to agents. He describes the process of paying agents; money was sent to the "Resident" (the spy operating in a foreign country over a long period, but who's not a native of that country), who passed it on to the agent. Each agent was described with a combination of letters and numbers.

Leamas is sweating. Meanwhile, Peters assesses him, wondering how much he knows and what his motivations for defecting are. Peters has seen defectors struggle to give their testimony, even if their defection was because of an ideological conversion. Peters reflects that he must help Leamas along and get information out of him, because Leamas is likely to lie by omission. Moreover, Peters thinks, Leamas is an alcoholic wreck—which makes him even more unpredictable and vain. Leamas also assesses Peters. He thinks that Peters, like himself, has been on the run before. Peters seems hard and fixed, as if shaped by a terrible early experience. Leamas thinks he would only lie with good reason, and likes that he seldom interrupts him, concluding that Peters is a real professional.

*Leamas's language skills and his working-class background were likely responsible for his being sent to do dangerous and unrewarding work in Holland during the war, which was harrowing and left him unprepared for the life of a civilian. After the war, Leamas went back to spying not because of an ideological drive, but because the war had left him unsuited to other work. The interlude during which he tried other careers also led to his reduced pension, the financial motivation he presents for betraying the Circus and defecting now.*



*Leamas describes Riembeck as having compromised himself and their shared mission by betraying the secrets of their work to Elvira. But to become one of Leamas's agents, Riembeck also had to betray his colleagues, country, and the Communist ideology he had pledged to support. Leamas sees Riembeck's betrayal of the Circus's secrets to Elvira as a more important betrayal, hardly recognizing Riembeck's betrayal of the GDR as a betrayal at all.*



*Leamas is giving away the secrets of how the Circus works, proving to Peters that he is a real defector. But these details are not yet of much interest. Leamas is not yet giving any specifics that would be surprising to Peters or likely to actually help the Communists to stop British operations in the future.*



*Two professional spies take each other's measure, wondering how to handle this dangerous and delicate conversation. Peters believes that Leamas is reluctant to give information out of pride and despair, because by betraying the Circus he is showing that the difficult life that drove him to become an alcoholic has all been a waste, in the service of an organization he is now betraying. He also knows that Leamas does not have any ideological reasons for defecting, so Leamas's pride must be handled carefully.*



Leamas describes to Peters how he built up his network in Berlin. He says that it was difficult initially because the city was swarming with spies and agents without any real insight. They had a good agent between 1954 and 1956, but then could not find a good source of intel until 1959, when Riembeck left a tin full of film in the car of a man who worked for Leamas named De Jong. The film showed the minutes of the Praesidium of the East German Communist party. After corroborating the authenticity of the material, Leamas took over the case from De Jong. He drove De Jong's car to the place in the woods where De Jong had first found the film in his car and went for a walk—but when he returned, nothing had been left in the car. A few weeks later, Leamas tried again, this time leaving a picnic basket in the car with one thousand dollars in it. When he returned, he found a tin of film. He did the same thing twice more in the next six weeks, each time receiving a tin of film with valuable pictures of documents.

Leamas did not want London to take this case from him, because he believed that they would ruin the connection by trying to get too much out of it too quickly. So Leamas set out to determine himself who the source of the materials was. From a list of members of the Presidium, he narrowed it down to a guess: Riembeck. Because the documents contained crossed out words, Leamas guessed that the source was one of the secretaries who took the notes. He wrote a coded message to Riembeck, tucked the message into a children's book, and then returned to the woods. Leamas took back with him yet another tin of film with important documents.

Peters interrupts Leamas. He asks Leamas if he really believes all the information he received came from Riembeck. Peters says Riembeck must have had help, and asks if no one at the Circus wondered whether Riembeck was being helped. Leamas hesitates, and says that no one from London ever asked him this.

Leamas continues to tell Peters about Riembeck, saying he was an exceptional source because he had access to the Praesidium, internal political and economic reporting, and the files of the East German Security Service. Peters contends that Riembeck only had limited access to these files, but Leamas shrugs and says he must have had total access. After this, Leamas says, London took over paying Riembeck and pressed Leamas to get Riembeck to recruit other agents to form a network. This undermined Riembeck's confidence and put strain on him. But, Leamas says, Riembeck's cover was not blown for an unusually long time.

*Leamas describes Berlin in the decade after the war: a city full of people spying on each other. People pledged their loyalty to one organization and then to another, and ideological divides were often less important than gaining money opportunistically. But without some loyal service to a cause, people usually could not get access to real secrets. Later, when Riembeck begins to spy for the British, Leamas does not wonder how he tracks down De Jong's car or why he would betray the GDR, without first getting an offer that it will bring him financial gain. Leamas accepts that there may be other forces at work that he does not know about, and does not seem curious about who is pulling the strings.*



*Leamas believes that only De Jong and Riembeck know about this new source of information from the Praesidium. Leamas wants to identify the source himself because he knows that the orders he gets sent from London may not be appropriate to the situation and may end up causing Riembeck's betrayal of the GDR to quickly come to light. In the hopes of achieving the ultimate goal of recruiting a steady agent, Leamas acts (or believes that he acts) autonomously, by briefly keeping the new source a secret from London.*



*If Leamas wanted to understand the larger organizational forces controlling spies and agents, he would wonder if Peters is right and if the Circus really never wondered how Riembeck was getting all the information he did. Leamas does not wonder, but the reader is meant to.*



*Riembeck supplied the British with large quantities of valuable information for an unusually long period of time without being exposed. Leamas does not wonder why this occurred, while Peters, who is more analytical, is already beginning to suspect that Riembeck had help from another British spy who was also on the Praesidium. As Leamas is presented with this new take on the situation, he rejects them, stubbornly continuing to believe that he knows all the facts.*



Leamas recalls all the information that Riemeck provided to the British in detail. Peters finally says that it is impossible that Riemeck would have had access to all this information, but Leamas insists that Riemeck did, getting angry. Peters inquires whether the Circus asked Leamas to press Riemeck about how he accessed the files, and Leamas says they didn't. Peters asks Leamas if he has heard the news: Elvira was shot a week ago as she left her apartment (in West Berlin). Leamas says that that used to be *his* apartment, and that he had not known about this. Peters says that perhaps she knew more about Riemeck's network than Leamas did. Leamas gets angry at this suggestion. Peters says he wonders who killed her.

The two continue talking until Leamas has told Peters everything he knows about operations in Berlin. Leamas reflects that it's odd that Peters is so certain Riemeck could not have had access to all the information he provided. He remembers that Control had wondered the same thing. Leamas thinks to himself that it might be true: perhaps there had been another source, and this was the "Special Interest" that Control wanted him to kill Mundt in order to protect. Control and Riemeck might have discussed this source when Leamas left them alone one evening in Berlin.

Leamas goes on to wonder about Elvira. Who killed her? He wonders if Control's Special Interest had known that Elvira knew his identity and had her killed. But, Leamas decides, this would have been impossible, because Elvira was not killed in East Berlin, but in West Berlin. Leamas also wonders why Control didn't tell him that she had been killed. He decides to give up trying to unravel Control's reasoning and falls asleep, thinking that Riemeck died because he told Elvira so much. Leamas also remembers Liz.

*As the head of the Berlin Station, Leamas had overseen giving Karl Riemeck his orders. Leamas does not believe that Riemeck could have had help from someone with even greater access without his knowing it. Even if he had known about it, Leamas would have pretended not to know that Elvira had been killed, because such knowledge would be inconsistent with his role as an ex-spy disconnected from current events in the place where he used to work. But this also suggests another instance of Control not being forthright with Leamas. Furthermore, Elvira's death does not bode well for Liz.*



*Leamas pretended to Peters that Control had never asked him whether he was sure Riemeck really had access to all the information he provided the British, but now Leamas finally contemplates the possibility that there actually is another, even more highly positioned spy that he never knew about. He also remembers the one time that he was excluded from a discussion between Control and Riemeck. Leamas does not trouble himself, however, to wonder who this other source, or "Special Interest," might be.*



*Leamas believes that what Control conceals from him must be justified by the mission, and he is too loyal to his work to jeopardize it by searching for answers about what is really going on, especially when he has a specific undercover role to play. He remembers that Riemeck died because he did not protect the mission's secrecy by confiding in Elvira. Although Leamas believes he was careful, he must also wonder if his connection to Liz opens him up to similar dangers.*



## CHAPTER 9: THE SECOND DAY

When Peters arrives the next day at Le Mirage, he and Leamas discuss Leamas's work once he returned to London after Riembeck's death. Leamas says he was going to be retired, but because of his broken service could not receive his full pension without working for another period. He was put in the Banking department, he says, and then fired after he started drinking heavily. Leamas tells Peters that the Banking department was not supposed to know the names of the agents whom they were paying. Banking signed the checks, which then went back to a department called Special Dispatch, which would put the agents' names on them. However, Leamas says, sometimes the complex logistics between the departments would lead to errors and he would learn agents' names. Leamas then goes to his room and brings Peters a list he drew up of the agents' names he remembers. Peters is impressed.

Next Leamas tells Peters about a special operation called "Rolling Stone," during which he took two trips: [one to Helsinki and the other to Copenhagen. In each city, he deposited money into a joint account for himself under an alias and an agent who could collect it under an alias. Afterwards, the agent received a false passport under the alias to draw the money from the account. This was an uncommon procedure, and only a few people knew the code name "Rolling Stone."](#) Peters asks why the Circus did not want the Resident to pay the agent himself and says Control ordered the operation as a special precaution. Peters is stunned to hear that Control himself ran the operation. Leamas says he knows the Rolling Stone agent was first paid in early 1959.

Leamas tells Peters the aliases he used to deposit money in the banks in Helsinki and Copenhagen, and the aliases the agent was to use. Peters notices that both of aliases for the agent are German names, but Leamas insists that the agent could not have been a German. Leamas says that he oversaw Berlin, and so would have known about any German source. Peters says that perhaps keeping Leamas in ignorance of the agent was yet another precaution taken by the Circus. Leamas disputes this, but reflects to himself that this is how Control told him to handle the situation. He is feeding Peters evidence, but refusing to draw the conclusion that evidence points to himself.

*Leamas describes the systems that the Circus used to keep its employees in the dark, to keep information from them that they might be tempted or forced to disclose to others. He describes it as a system that is so complex that it sometimes leads to information being unintentionally exposed because of logistical issues. At the same time, the system that Leamas is describing is one that he participated in after his return from Berlin. This indicates that everything that Leamas describes to Peters is something he and Control planned for him to say as part of the operation to kill Mundt.*



*Leamas describes two trips that he took while working in the Banking department. These trips, which were not described earlier in the book, were experiences that Control and Leamas planned together, so that he could describe them at this moment during his current staged defection. During this description Leamas must emphasize how little he understands about the larger goals of the operation, because he does not want Peters to suspect that he is being fed information in order to lead him to certain specific conclusions.*



*Leamas must give the impression that he does not know, or care to know, the larger goals of the Circus's operations, but he also must stubbornly refuse evidence suggesting that he misunderstood the scope of his own role. He supplies evidence that the British employed an important German spy, while denying that that this would be possible without his knowledge. But what Leamas does not realize is that the role of an agent oblivious to his agency's larger purposes is not a farfetched one for him to play, as was shown when Leamas was surprised to hear from Peters—and to not have heard from Control—about Elvira's murder.*



## CHAPTER 10: THE THIRD DAY

The next morning, Peters does not arrive at Le Mirage. Leamas is impatient and goes for a walk on the beach. He sees a girl with black hair standing on the beach and thinks about Liz. He realizes that she gave him back the desire to enjoy life's small pleasures. Leamas plans to return to her. In one or two weeks, he thinks, he will be home. Control had said that he could keep the fifteen thousand pounds, and then he would get a pension as well, and would be able to "afford to come in from the cold."

Peters arrives at Le Mirage later that afternoon, after Leamas has returned from the beach. Peters has bad news: Leamas is a wanted man in England, with his face printed in the newspapers. Leamas thinks that this is Control's doing, and that Control misled him into taking the assignment. Control had said it would take a few weeks and then he could come back to England and lie low until Mundt was eliminated. Now Leamas realizes that if he says he wants to return to England, where he is a wanted man, he will wreck the operation. Leamas thinks that he should have realized that Control was promising him too much too easily. Leamas asks to see the newspapers, but Peters says he does not have them. Leamas accuses Peters of making the whole thing up, but Peters ignores this, saying he Leamas must put himself in the hands of the Eastern side and go to Berlin for further interrogation.

Leamas is given a new fake passport, which he uses at the airport. While Peters waits in line, Leamas buys a British newspaper. Rifling through it, he finds that Peters was not lying: there is a wanted ad for him. He wonders if Liz has seen the ad. Then Leamas and Peters board the plane for Berlin. Leamas feels frightened for the first time since setting out on the operation.

## CHAPTER 11: FRIENDS OF ALEC

That evening in London, two men call on Liz Gold. Liz has nothing to remember Leamas by, and no mutual friend who reminds her of him except Miss Crail at the library, who had hated him. Miss Crail is frustrated because Leamas never collected his final wages. Liz keeps working at the library because it reminds her of him. Once, after he left, she had gone to his apartment. His landlord told her that two men, including a plump, short man with glasses, had come and settled Leamas's outstanding rent.

*Leamas believes that he may be close to finishing his mission: he had asked to be allowed to go back to England after his initial interrogation. He begins to allow himself to consider what it will be like to return to England and be able to live without a spy's responsibility. The woman's hair reminds him of his intimacy with Liz, which he hopes to return to.*



*Although Leamas has dedicated his life to the Circus, making huge sacrifices for it, his first thought when he hears that he is a wanted man in England is that Control lied to him about the intended course of the operation. Leamas expects to be betrayed by his service, if that is justified by the mission. But although he knows this about Control, he does not know how far Control envisions the mission straying from the plan that they discussed. Clearly, however, Control wants to force Leamas to go further East, into dangerous situations he never agreed to put himself into. Leamas can only agree to go with Peters.*



*In buying the newspaper, Leamas was holding onto hope that he was being lied to by Peters, rather than betrayed by Control. He sees that he is losing control of his future and wonders if he will ever be allowed to return to Liz and the connection he hoped to nurture with her.*



*Liz has none of Leamas's qualms about forming a deep personal connection. She fell in love with him and hopes he will return, despite the mysterious circumstances that surround him. It is also notable that the man who came to pay Leamas's rent was short and plump and wore glasses: just like George Smiley.*



Liz wonders why Leamas hit Ford the grocer. She knows he has a terrible temper, but feels that this was not the reason. If he had hit Ford spontaneously, she thinks, he would not have known to say goodbye to her the night before. She cannot believe that he broke things off with her just because he was sick of their relationship, and instead thinks that he always had something he planned on doing, although she has no idea what. At her Communist party branch meeting, they had discussed the incident, and even had it written up in a party newspaper as an instance of how easily the Capitalist system could turn violent. The branch treasurer, George Hanby, had spoken to a man in spectacles who had seen the incident, and had told him it happened very spontaneously.

Two men come to Liz's apartment. One is short and plump, with glasses and a worried expression that makes Liz trust him. He asks Liz about her relationship with Leamas, asking if anyone else knew about their relationship, and if she was surprised that he hit Mr. Ford. Liz does not want to say too much, but she has bottled up her feelings and wants to talk, so she answers the men's questions. She tells them that the night before Leamas hit Ford, he had told her that he had a job to do. The short man (who turns out to be George Smiley) asks Liz if she knows that Leamas had a wife and two children, but she only blushes and says that she was in love with him, although she does not know if he was in love with her.

Liz asks the two men to leave, and the short man gives her a card and tells her he is a friend of Leamas's, and to call if she ever needs help. He asks her if Leamas knew that she was in the Communist party, and she says yes. He also asks if the Party knew that she was seeing Leamas, and she says no one knew. Then Liz begins to cry and beg for information about where Leamas is. The short man says that Leamas is abroad, and that Leamas never should have said so much to her. When the men leave, Liz looks at the card, which is expensively printed and says, "Mr. George Smiley."

## CHAPTER 12: EAST

Leamas is sitting on the plane to Berlin, reflecting on the last part of his career. He says to himself that Control was right—he has been getting burnt out. He remembers that last year he was on his way to meet Riembeck, speeding on the highway, which was crowded with huge, heavy **lorries**, when he had to pound on his brakes to avoid hitting a car full of children. Afterwards, Leamas pulled over and struggled to breathe, thinking of how the children's bodies might have looked once they were killed, and remembering the bodies of murdered refugees during **World War II**. When he got back in the car, he drove slowly and missed his meeting. From then on, Leamas always remembers the children whenever he drives.

*Liz could see through Leamas's detachment and understand it was at least partially a role he was playing for a mysterious reason. The seeming deliberateness of his fight with Ford is even more puzzling, though, because it suggests that Leamas wanted to be sent to prison. The rather absurd stretch of applying Communist ideology as an explanation for Leamas hitting Ford is not lost on Liz, because she suspects Leamas's rage was not real, but simulated. Once again, the little man in spectacles who becomes tangentially involved is likely George Smiley. In this case, he wanted to be sure that it got around that the fight occurred spontaneously.*



*Smiley seems to come to visit Liz to check on how much she knows and to ascertain whether Leamas broke with the spy's practice of putting the mission above all else by sharing details about his work with Liz—and Smiley can see that Leamas forged a connection with Liz. Although what Leamas told Liz was vague, to Smiley's mind, the fact that Liz realizes that Leamas hit Ford the grocer deliberately is a particularly troubling breach of the secrecy surrounding Leamas's undercover mission.*



*Although reaching out to Liz seems like an act of kindness, it goes against Leamas's request to Control that she be left alone after he leaves for his mission. It is unclear whether Smiley knows that he is betraying Leamas's wishes in this way, or whether Control tricked him into doing so, but it is clearly another way in which Control is changing the plan that he agreed on with Leamas.*



*This experience reveals just how fragile and exhausted Leamas was, even before accepting the mission to take down Mundt—he's been worn down by years of dangerous work. He has spent more than two decades navigating tense situations, as there is little difference in the level of danger for a spy between working during wartime and during peacetime. As he rushes to meet Riembeck – putting his job above the rules of safe driving – Leamas is reminded of the fact that the risks he takes in his work can actually lead to the deaths of the innocent people he wants to protect.*



On the plane to Berlin, Leamas considers passing a note to an American woman who is also on the plane with a message for her to pass it on to the British authorities, but then dismisses the idea, because he realizes that Control must have arranged for this to happen to him. Control had never mentioned what might become of him, only coaching him on how to behave. Control had told Leamas to drink a lot, to be rude, and not to pretend to have converted to Communist ideology, saying that the other side wanted to deduce their conclusions from his evidence. Control had said it would be worth it, and Leamas had felt he could not turn down the mission. He remembers a book in which an old revolutionary prepares himself to experience torture, and admits to himself that he does not think he could stand it.

In the airport Leamas hopes he will run into someone he knows who will help him somehow. Peters no longer pretends not to know him, seeing West Berlin as basically safe ground. Peters makes a signal and they get into a car. They are watched by a man in a telephone booth and followed by another car. Leamas thinks that he could attack Peters and make a run for it, but he does not. At the border of East Germany, the car that follows them goes ahead to talk to the police at the checkpoint, then both cars are let through together. Leamas notices that the Eastern side of the **Berlin Wall** has been more elaborately fortified since he saw it last.

Leamas asks Peters where they are going, and Peters says that he will be interrogated in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Leamas expresses surprise that he will not be going further East, but Peters says that he thought the Germans should have a chance to speak to him, since most of Leamas's work was in Berlin.

Leamas thinks he will meet with a man from the Abteilung named Fiedler, whose file he knows well. Peters neither confirms nor denies this, but Leamas feels nearly certain Fiedler will be his interrogator. He says to Peters that Fiedler almost killed one of Peter Guillam's agents. Fiedler is supposed to be intelligent and savage, without professional ambition but merciless and sarcastic. Leamas thinks back to a dinner at Control's house with Peter Guillam and Control (when they were discussing Leamas's current assignment). Control had told them that Fiedler, a Jew, was their best bet to get Mundt, the former Nazi, and that Leamas should supply Fiedler the material he would need to bring Mundt down. Control had added that Leamas would, of course, do this only indirectly, because he would hopefully never actually meet Fiedler. They had all laughed at this joke of Control's.

*Leamas understands that he can no longer predict what will become of him. He believes that he is still carrying out the mission to take down Mundt in the manner that Control wants, but he is scared because he realizes that Control only instructed him in how to behave, and lied about what kind of situations he would be put into. Although Leamas has been betrayed, he has no choice but to remain loyal to his mission, because to do otherwise would amount to admitting that he is on a mission, which would lead to his capture and torture by the Communists.*



*Leamas is rightfully scared. Having spied on the East Germans for many years, he is now in their custody on a mission to harm them that he knows he no longer fully understands. He knows about their brutal methods better than anyone. He contemplates trying to get away through violence, but there are many people watching him. The additionally fortified Berlin Wall reminds him of Karl Riembeck's death and spurs his fear that he will be the next one to die attempting to cross.*



*Leamas believes Peters to be a Soviet agent, but he knows that the Soviets and the East Germans are closely connected. His surprise is likely feigned: he knows his mission is in East Germany, to take out Mundt, and so it makes sense for him to go there.*



*Leamas has heard that Fiedler is best understood by the ideologies he lives by and those he struggles against. Fiedler is a dedicated Communist, but is also Jewish. He works with Mundt, who was a Nazi during the war, and so he is caught in a struggle against both the Capitalist West and the remaining anti-Semitism in his own society. Control described Fiedler, preparing Leamas to meet him, in the context of a "joke" about the possibility that Leamas would be sent to East Germany, while all the while cynically arranging for exactly this to happen.*



They arrive at an old hunting lodge, which is decorated with Soviet leaders' photographs and has fire safety instructions on the walls. Peters and Leamas go in, and Leamas asks Peters if he's been here before, and whether it was with Fiedler. Peters says yes, and Leamas asks Peters if Fiedler is good at his job. Peters says that Fiedler is not bad for a Jew, and at this moment, Fiedler enters. He carries a bottle of whisky and tell the guards to bring them food. Fiedler addresses Leamas in English, and Leamas remembers that Fiedler and his family fled the Nazis to Canada during **World War II**, but returned in 1946 to participate in building a Communist Germany.

Fiedler tells Leamas that he will not be going further East, and Peters confirms this. Leamas acts furious at having been lied to. Fiedler explains that, because the GDR has no embassies yet in the West, they were forced to initially go through the Russians, using the Soviet embassy at The Hague. Leamas accuses Fiedler of having betrayed his defection to the British, but Fiedler says that this is a ridiculous suggestion. Peters bids Leamas goodbye, but Leamas says nothing, and Peters remains standing at the door. Leamas begins to scream insults about East Germany and its subservience to Russia, saying that the East Germans revealed his defection to the British to get him to come East with Peters.

Fiedler says that Leamas has no reason to be so angry: both secret services sacrifice individuals when it will benefit the collective. Leamas should expect to be lied to; after all, he is betraying the Circus by defecting. Leamas says that Fiedler has tricked him into coming to East Germany out of ambition: Fiedler, Leamas says, wants to succeed in a brilliant operation to be promoted above Mundt. Fiedler says it remains to be seen how successful an operation it will be, and assures Leamas that the East did not tell the Circus that Leamas had defected. Finally, Fiedler says that Leamas would have been released in Holland if he had told Peters all he knew, but Fiedler knows that Leamas has not revealed everything yet. Peters leaves. Fiedler offers Leamas a whisky and water, saying they could not get soda. Leamas curses at him, and Fiedler says that Leamas is a proud man.

*The portraits in the lodge present an ever-present reminder to everyone that they are now in the Communist East. At the same time, Peters's casual anti-Semitism is out of step with Communist theory about human equality regardless of ethnicity. Despite being a Communist, Fiedler is still in a dangerous position as an outsider, because both Soviets and East German Communists do not practice the equality they preach, but often remain prejudiced against Jews.*



*Leamas continues to play the role he was sent to play. He acts enraged at being stuck in the GDR, which is supposed to create the impression that he thought he was defecting to the Soviets (not the East Germans). By acting like this was his assumption, he hopes to dispel the impression that he might still be working for the British on an operation targeting someone in East Germany. The political divisions of the early 1960s are also highlighted here: while Britain and the Soviet Union have a diplomatic relationship, East Germany was not recognized as a country by Western countries until the early 1970s.*



*Fiedler's ideology holds that individuals can be sacrificed for the greater good. For him, there is no value to honesty if it does not help his goals. Leamas accuses Fiedler of acting out of ambition, although he knows Fiedler is an ideologist, only interested in defending Communism. Even though Control has betrayed him, Leamas remains loyal to the role he was told to play – acting proud and angry and lashing out in ways that he knows will give the impression that he does not really understand the members of the East German leadership.*



After eating dinner with Fiedler, Leamas is taken to his room and falls asleep. The next morning, as Leamas is eating breakfast, Fiedler comes into his bedroom. He says that he must get Leamas to tell him everything he knows, even the things he is not aware that he knows. Leamas says that he did not propose this deal to them—they came to him, and so it's not his fault if he doesn't have exciting information for them. Fiedler asks Leamas what he would do if he heard about Rolling Stone. Leamas says he would be on the lookout for the spy, but that there is nothing else that can be done. Fiedler says it is clear to him that Leamas is an operator, not an evaluator.

Fiedler begins asking Leamas detailed questions about how the files were handled for Rolling Stone. Leamas seems to struggle to recall the details of how the files passed from person to person, explaining that he was drinking a great deal at the time. Fiedler asks who gave the files to him and, finally, in a rush, Leamas says that he remembers that Peter Guillam was the one who brought them to him. He says Guillam was in a section called Satellite Four, researching food shortages in East Germany, and that he and Guillam never discussed Rolling Stone with one another. Fiedler asks Leamas if it was possible that Guillam was involved in running the Rolling Stone agent. Angrily, Leamas bursts out that he already told Peters: it would have been impossible for an agent to be run in East Germany without his knowing, because he was the station chief.

## CHAPTER 13: PINS OR PAPER CLIPS

On long walks through the countryside around the lodge, Fiedler asks Leamas questions about every detail of the British secret service. He is especially interested in the philosophy of those who work for the Circus. He asks if they are Christians. Leamas replies that not many are and says that not everyone has a philosophy. Fiedler asks how spies can justify their actions without a philosophy, explaining that the Abteilung is “the vanguard of the fight for Peace and Progress,” and that lives sacrificed to protect the movement are worth giving up. Pressed further, Leamas says his philosophy is “the whole lot of you are bastards.” Fiedler accepts this, but presses Leamas on the philosophy of his colleagues at the Circus, saying that Christians are supposed to believe in the sanctity of human life. Leamas replies that he does not know or care how his colleagues justify what they do.

*Leamas pretends that he does not know that Fiedler has brought him to East Germany to press him for more details about Rolling Stone, although this is exactly what he expects and hopes Fiedler to do. His role is to make Fiedler believe that throughout his career Leamas was misled and kept in the dark by the Circus, so that Fiedler will fill in the details that Leamas seems too incurious to fill in for himself.*



*Leamas continues to play the role he and Control decided upon. In a spontaneous-seeming way, he brings up information that draws in Peter Guillam's name. Guillam, along with George Smiley, was involved in trying to hunt down Mundt during Mundt's time spying in England in 1959, events recounted in the earlier novel A Call for the Dead. Leamas hopes that presenting himself as not very skilled at drawing inferences based on a scattered set of facts will lead Fiedler to more confidently put the facts he is being fed together himself, out of pride in his own intellect—and thus be more likely to reach the conclusion Leamas wants him to.*



*Fiedler and Leamas present two very different ways a spy can look at the immoral things he does for his profession. Fiedler sees his work as being of great historic importance and his life as dedicated to the cause of making human society better. For him, this overarching goal justifies almost anything. For his part, Leamas tries to understand his enemy's mindset, but Leamas has no real philosophy. Earlier in the novel, Liz also pressed Leamas to tell her what he believed in, but could not pierce his secrecy. Leamas himself seemingly does not understand what motivates him or justifies his work, but he fears that expressing his feelings will jeopardize his ability to stay focused on the mission.*



Fiedler and Leamas sit at the top of a hill, and Fiedler begins to ask more questions about Rolling Stone. Leamas says he believes the money he deposited in joint accounts in Oslo and Copenhagen was meant for an agent operating behind the Iron Curtain, but does not know if the agent ever withdrew the funds. Fiedler asks about correspondence with the banks, and Leamas says that Control would have handled this, writing above Leamas's signature in the alias's name. He says that he's used to only understanding part of an operation. Fiedler suggests that they write to one of the banks and find out if the money was withdrawn. If they do that, he reasons, it will show the agent's whereabouts on a specific day. Leamas says Fiedler will never find the agent based on so little. Fiedler says that, although Leamas may not have been supposed to know it, Rolling Stone was certainly an operation against the GDR.

Leamas begins to get angry. He says he has done his part and never promised to write any letters. Fiedler explains that they have only finished the first part of the interrogation. Later, they will need to ask follow-up questions, and will not let Leamas go before then. Leamas has told them only the things he thinks may be important, but there could be tiny details, like whether the Circus uses "pins or paper clips," that turn out later to be important pieces of information. Fiedler tells Leamas he will help him later, when Leamas will likely need a friend, if Leamas cooperates. Leamas agrees to write the letters to the banks, but says that he will find a way to kill Fiedler if he learns Fiedler is lying to him again.

Unlike an actor, the narrator says, spies can never stop playing the part they have taken on, and must continuously fight to suppress their own desires. To prevent himself from giving in to the temptation to come out of the role he has taken on, Leamas continues to play that role even when he is alone. He acts restless, uncertain, and addicted to alcohol, and rarely thinks about the deception he is perpetrating. Leamas reflects that Control had been right that Fiedler could be fed evidence against Mundt. Leamas wonders if perhaps Fiedler is the agent that Control wants him to protect, but knows that he should not try to figure this out in case it changes how he performs his role. He hopes that Fiedler is the agent, because in that case he feels he might still be able to return home.

*Fiedler's primary aim in his conversations with Leamas has become to uncover the identity of the agent Rolling Stone was organized to pay. He is sure this agent came from the GDR. Leamas feeds Fiedler details about Rolling Stone but refuses to draw any conclusions about the agent the operation was organized to pay, and continues to voice his disagreement that the agent could have come from the GDR. Leamas is playing the role of an operator who does not understand what is behind the operation, but this is hardly a difficult role for him to play. This representation of himself as out-of-the-loop is true to his actual feelings about himself on his current mission.*



*Fiedler is building a relationship with Leamas, who he thinks of as a simple, but honest man. He tries to be straight with Leamas, saying he cannot let him go, but pledging to help him in future moments of danger if Leamas cooperates. Fiedler has already said that the agent paid during Rolling Stone was definitely someone from the GDR. Now, he suggests that if he and Leamas succeed in discovering which East German is actually a British spy, Leamas may be exposed to danger.*



*Leamas thinks that Fiedler is beginning to suspect that Mundt is the British agent being paid through Rolling Stone, which is exactly the idea that Control had instructed Leamas to plant in Fiedler's mind. Leamas sticks to his role as an unthoughtful operator, despite Fiedler's attempts to reach out to him and make a more personal connection. Leamas knows that he does not understand exactly what Control's plan entails, but he hopes that Fiedler is the British agent he was sent to protect.*



## CHAPTER 14: LETTER TO A CLIENT

The next morning, Fiedler brings Leamas letters to the banks in Oslo and Copenhagen to sign under the aliases he used to open the bank accounts. Leamas practices the aliases' signatures and then signs the letters. Fiedler says that they will spend a week together, talking and awaiting a response. He offers Leamas a prostitute, but Leamas refuses, saying that unlike Fiedler, he does not need a pimp. Fiedler says that Leamas had a woman in England, and Leamas becomes enraged. He says never to mention her again, and to tell whomever told Fiedler about her never to mention it again if they want his cooperation. Fiedler says he will tell them, but it may be too late.

On a walk that day, Fiedler steers the conversation to Mundt. He asks Leamas if he knew that Mundt was in England. Leamas says that Peter Guillam told him that Mundt had killed a man while he was there. Fiedler remarks that it is odd that Mundt was able to escape England after that, but Leamas says that there was never a full attempt made to catch Mundt. Fiedler is shocked. Leamas says that there was a different organizational structure at the Circus in those years, and that Guillam had told him that, if Mundt had been caught, all kinds of embarrassing information would have come out about the man who was the head of the Circus before Control. Fiedler asks if Leamas never wondered if there were some other reason Mundt escaped. Leamas seems not to understand the question.

Fiedler steers the conversation to Riemeck, asking Leamas about the occasion when Riemeck and Control met. Leamas says that Control always liked to be around when things were going well, and Riemeck felt flattered to meet Control. Fiedler asks if Leamas ever left Control and Riemeck alone together, and Leamas answers that he did for a few minutes, at Control's request. He says he does not know why they spoke alone, but that he thinks the flattery went to Riemeck's head and led to his betraying too much to Elvira. Fiedler says to Leamas that he is beginning to like him, but wonders why he ever defected. Before Leamas responds, Fiedler laughs and says that that was not a tactful thing for him to say.

One night, Leamas and Fiedler go driving together in a car. Fiedler stops at a phone booth, leaving the keys in the car and makes a long call. When he returns to the car, Leamas asks why he didn't just call from the house. Fiedler warns him to be careful, and then drives for a while. Then they stop and get out of the car. Grasping Leamas's arm, Fiedler tells him that he may need to look after himself for a while, but everything will be all right. Leamas hates being touched, and says he does not know what Fiedler means.

*Fiedler and Leamas are spending a great deal of time together, and Fiedler clearly likes Leamas's blunt honesty. Leamas fears his ability to play the role assumed for the mission may be compromised if he lets himself feel close to Fiedler. Leamas learns in this scene that the East Germans are aware of his relationship with Liz and may try to use it against him, and he tells Fiedler never to mention it again. Leamas does not seem to process Fiedler's ominous statement that it may be "too late" for this.*



*Leamas gives an accurate accounting of what he knows about Mundt's time in England, a period described in the novel A Call for the Dead. To Fiedler's mind, the idea that an enemy spy who had killed a British citizen would escape England without being pursued at the orders of the head of the security service suggests a nearly inconceivable instance of disloyalty by the man supposed to be leading intelligence operations. Fiedler thinks that it is much more likely that Mundt was captured in England and forced to sign on as a British spy, but when he hints this to Leamas, Leamas continues to play dumb.*



*To Fiedler, the fact that Control came to Berlin to meet Riemeck and then asked to spend some time alone with him is a clear sign that there was a part of the operation in Berlin that Control was not letting Leamas in on. Fiedler may sense that Leamas is a loyal member of the Circus who does not get the same treatment from the Circus in return. Fiedler is also used to being looked down on and potentially excluded because he is Jewish, and, like Leamas, he is entirely dedicated to his work. He knows that he himself would never betray his country, despite any ill-treatment, and he seems to be getting the idea that Leamas is similar.*



*Fiedler trusts Leamas not to drive away while he is in the phone booth. Leamas, on the other hand, resents this trust placed in him as a sign of a personal connection that may endanger his ability to cool-headedly complete his mission. Although he should know that the car may be bugged by others in the East German secret police who are spying on Fiedler, Leamas asks Fiedler why he called from the booth. But while Leamas is pushing Fiedler away, Fiedler assures Leamas that he will look out for him.*



Fiedler drives to a hilltop and he and Leamas get out of the car to talk. Fiedler begins to talk about Mundt, who he says shoots first and asks questions later. This is illogical in their profession, since the information that could be gleaned from those Mundt shoots is of the utmost importance. Mundt used to capture people and let Fiedler interrogate them, but then he started killing all the suspects before Fiedler could even speak with them.

Fiedler says he has worked it out: Mundt was caught in England and then turned into a British spy. Leamas says Fiedler is out of his mind, repeating again that it would be impossible for an agent to be run out of Berlin without Leamas knowing it, when he had been the head of Berlin Station. Fiedler says that he received a letter back from the bank in Copenhagen: the money was withdrawn by the co-signatory on the joint account, and the day when it was withdrawn coincides with a trip Mundt took to Copenhagen.

*Fiedler believes that Mundt has been killing off suspected spies like Riemeck because he knows that if these suspected spies are interrogated they will tell the East Germans that Mundt is spying for the British. Fiedler sees Mundt's action as a betrayal of their mission and wonders what other betrayals Mundt has committed.*



*Leamas has gotten Fiedler to draw exactly the conclusions that Control hoped Fiedler would draw. Leamas himself still does not believe that Mundt works for the British, believing instead that there is some other agent working for whom he has been sent to protect. Leamas thinks he has given Fiedler (fabricated) evidence that Mundt is a spy for the British.*



## CHAPTER 15: COME TO THE BALL

In London, Liz receives a letter from Party Centre, an organizational headquarters for Communist party members, inviting her to visit Leipzig to exchange experiences with other Branch Secretaries there. She thinks her name must have been suggested by that “queer” man Ashe from Cultural Relations, who had taken her out to coffee and asked her so many personal questions about herself, like whether she had a boyfriend. The trip is quite soon, and she wonders why they think she will be able to get the time off from work, but then remembers that she told Ashe that she has vacation days left for the year. She also finds it an oddly long letter, given the fact that the Centre is usually short on secretaries. She does recognize the signature on the letter, however, and its tone matches the usual “awkward, semi-bureaucratic, semi-Messianic style” of most communications from the party.

The letter compliments Liz on her work spreading the word about Communism, when in fact that is her least favorite part of the work. When she is sent out to sell copies of the *Daily Worker* she sometimes just buys them herself so she can go home. She knows other party members do the same, and she wonders how they justify it to themselves, and why they all need to lie so much. She also wonders about why she was made Branch Secretary in the first place. She assumes it was because someone wanted to sleep with her, and then the others had gone along with the suggestion because she could type. She finds it very odd.

*In the time since Leamas has left, Ashe has come to get to know Liz and she has been promoted to Branch Secretary of her local Communist organization. Ashe is one of the Communists who recruited Leamas, and Leipzig is in East Germany, which recalls Fiedler's menacing hint that it might be “too late” to never mention Liz to Leamas again. For the first time, Liz can feel that there is something odd in the way she is being treated by the Communist Party, but she does not suspect that she is being manipulated for any consequential reason, because she does not think that there is anything for the party to gain by manipulating her.*



*Although Liz is a heartfelt believer in Communist ideology, she is suspicious of some of the Party's rhetoric and methods. She herself is not above cheating when she is sent to sell newspapers that no one wants to buy, because this does not seem to her like the true work of the Party. She sees that the lofty goals set by Communists often lead to people cutting corners and telling lies, which she finds morally repugnant.*



Although the circumstances are strange, Liz is excited for the trip, which she could never afford to take on her own. She has never been abroad before at all. She does feel a bit suspicious of Germans, even though the party says East Germany is democratic and peaceful and West Germany is full of fascists. It occurs to her that perhaps she has been invited because her father was killed during **World War II**. This thought reassures her. The Party, she feels, wants her to travel to Germany as a gesture of reconciliation. Liz responds to the letter, accepting the offer. As she closes her desk drawer she catches sight of Smiley's card, and remembers him asking her if the Party knew about her relationship with Leamas. The trip, Liz reflects, will take her mind off missing Leamas.

*Liz feels sure that there is a hidden reason that she has been chosen to go on this exciting trip, but she does not suspect that it has to do with the geopolitical competition between East and West, or with Leamas. Instead, she thinks that the distant powers-that-be in Party Centre must have a reason for wanting her to travel to Leipzig that coincides with her own moral convictions. She wants to be a part of an effort to strengthen the post-war peace, and willfully believes that there is nothing sinister behind this odd invitation.*



## CHAPTER 16: ARREST

When Fiedler and Leamas arrive back at the lodge, three men who say they were sent by Berlin call to Fiedler, who walks towards them. Leamas goes to his wing of the building. The lights are off. He enters a room and the door closes behind him without a sound. Leamas remembers that he was advised during **World War II** that "you've nearly always got a weapon" and he crushes a matchbox into sharp wooden shards. He moves a chair into the center of the room, then calls out in German to the guards, taunting them. A guard enters and trips over the chair, then Leamas beats him up and lets his body fall to the ground. The lights go on. Leamas sees three men standing in the doorway, and then he is hit in the head and loses consciousness.

*Leamas and Fiedler return to the lodge after Fiedler has revealed to Leamas that he believes that Mundt is a British spy. Fiedler also cryptically warned Leamas that there might be danger ahead. Now, seeing that there are strangers in the house, Leamas goes into a defensive mode. He forgets his earlier disgust for Mundt's killing of Riemeck or his own horror at almost killing the carful of children on the highway. Instead, he violently attacks a guard who was surely not coming to capture Leamas without sufficient backup.*



When Leamas wakes up, he is lying on the ground, tied up. He cannot move without excruciating pain, and thinks he must have been beaten up after he lost consciousness. After hours, the door opens and a man enters. Leamas recognizes Mundt by a description Smiley had given him of his eyes.

*Leamas has been playing a role meant to lead the East Germans to believe that Mundt is a British spy. Now he seems to have been found out and arrested, and will likely be tortured further by Mundt.*



## CHAPTER 17: MUNDT

Leamas is untied and tries to stand but cannot. A guard kicks him, and then Leamas attacks the guard. The guard is about to kick Leamas again when Mundt tells him to bring Leamas into the other room. Mundt gives Leamas water and orders a guard to bring him food. Leamas asks where Fiedler is, and Mundt tells him that he is under arrest for "conspiring to sabotage the security of the people." Leamas asks Mundt if he is being accused of having been sent by the Circus to frame Mundt, and Mundt assents. Mundt is extremely self-confident, and never speaks to fill awkward silences. He is athletic-looking with a cold manner, and Leamas can easily imagine him murdering someone.

*Mundt allows the guard to kick Leamas once and then stops him from kicking him again, asserting that he has full control over Leamas now. Even without this pointed gesture, Leamas instantly senses from Mundt's way of carrying himself that Mundt is used to being in control of other people and views himself as superior. Leamas can imagine Mundt killing someone because he can see that Mundt would easily be able to separate that person into a different, less-human category.*



Mundt tells Leamas that he will be charged with murdering the guard at the lodge. If Leamas wants the court to go easy on him, he will have to confess to having been sent by the Circus to frame Mundt with Fiedler's help. The court will then look at his case sympathetically and consider that he was blackmailed by the Circus, which had accused him of stealing money. Leamas asks Mundt how he knows about the accusation that he had stolen money, but Mundt doesn't answer. Instead, Mundt remarks that Fiedler hates him so much that he stupidly tried to frame him. Mundt says he could see from Peters' report that Leamas had been sent by London to frame him. Then, when he asked Fiedler for his report, Fiedler sent it to the other members of the Praesidium, but not to Mundt, and Mundt was sure he was right.

Mundt asks Leamas when he last saw Smiley. Leamas says he cannot remember, but Mundt persists, asking him again and again. Mundt asks Leamas where he went after his lunch with Ashe, but Leamas says he cannot remember, and begs to be allowed to go lie down, saying he is sick. Mundt asks Leamas why he tried to shake off his followers. Leamas answers nothing, only breathing heavily and in intense pain. Suddenly the room fills with people and shouting, and Leamas is carried away. He wakes up in a hospital, with Fiedler standing at the foot of his bed.

## CHAPTER 18: FIEDLER

Fiedler tells Leamas that he was also interrogated, and that Mundt not only had him beat up, but also whispered anti-Semitic taunts in his ear the whole time. Fiedler says it is all over now, because he had already applied for an arrest warrant for Mundt as an enemy of the people. Fiedler sent the entire Praesidium his report on Mundt and they finally arrested Mundt. A secret Tribunal will begin tomorrow. Fiedler tells Leamas that there will be three judges, drawn from the members of the Praesidium, and these judges will prepare a report which contains a recommendation similar to a verdict. Fiedler will prosecute Mundt, and a man named Karden, who was also a Nazi, will defend him. Fiedler says that he has heard that Karden will call a witness, but Leamas shrugs at this.

*The story about Leamas stealing money from the Banking Department was disseminated throughout the Circus to give a plausible explanation for Leamas's sudden departure from the organization. Other parts of the plan – like Leamas punching Ford the grocer – were meant to be discovered by Communist agents who the Circus thought would be tracking Leamas in the hopes that he would defect. To Leamas, this represents another way in which events have diverged from the agreed-to plan.*



*Leamas fears that he has been caught by Mundt and will never be released. He does not understand why Mundt keeps asking him when the last time he saw Smiley was, and this only makes him more confused and apprehensive. It does not occur to Leamas that Mundt is using this question to stall for time. It later turns out that Mundt knows during this interrogation that he will soon be arrested and Leamas will be returned to Fiedler, and that this is exactly what he hopes to happen.*



*Fiedler sent his report accusing Mundt of spying to the other members of the Praesidium, but they still deferred to Mundt and, at least initially, agreed to arrest Fiedler and turn him over to Mundt. This distrust towards Fiedler and deference towards Mundt is a sign of the deep undercurrents of anti-Semitism throughout the East German leadership, as is Mundt's choice of a fellow ex-Nazi to lead his defense. Leamas is so battered from his experience during the arrest that he barely considers what it means that the defense will also call a witness.*



Fiedler says that Mundt wanted him to confess that he was in league with the British to frame Mundt. Leamas says that Mundt said the same to him, accusing him of being part of a British plot to destroy Mundt. Fiedler asks Leamas if the British had sent Leamas in order to get the East Germans to kill Mundt, if they would be willing to kill an innocent man. Leamas retorts that Mundt is a killer, not an innocent man, but Fiedler presses him further, asking if London would be willing to see him—Fiedler—killed. Leamas says that depends on what was at stake. Fiedler says that this proves the two systems are the same. Fiedler leaves, telling Leamas to rest. Leamas falls asleep, content in the knowledge that he will soon bring Mundt to his death.

*Fiedler has clearly been struggling with the question of whether Communist spies are more brutal in their methods than the Western ones. He knows that Communists are ideologically able to justify the deaths of innocents, while the Western powers claim that this is unacceptable. But in the fight against Communists, Western spies are just as willing to kill—Leamas himself admits this. Fiedler believes that Leamas only understands a part of the Circus's strategy and he wonders if Leamas is actually an unwitting part of a British plot to kill Fiedler himself.*



## CHAPTER 19: BRANCH MEETING

Liz enjoys her trip to Leipzig. She stays with a Branch Secretary named Frau Ebert. Food is scarce, which makes Liz feel like she is sacrificing something to help others. They do work organizing for several days, leading up to the Branch Meeting, which is supposed to be a discussion of “Coexistence after two wars.” Liz expects a large turnout, and is crushed when only seven people attend. She wonders if Leamas is right that people only believe in things because of a personal need for meaning, but reminds herself of the Communist principles she believes in.

*Liz feels set apart in England by her Communism. In Leipzig, she wants to feel that she is finally in a place where people share her beliefs. She takes the shortage of food as a sign that everyone is making sacrifices so that resources can be shared equally. The low attendance at the discussion group suggests to her that people are not actually invested in what she says, and that her belief in Communist principles is inconsequential.*



The meeting's speaker leaves before the general discussion, which Liz finds rude. At the end of the meeting, a man appears and asks for her. He shows Frau Ebert a piece of paper, then introduces himself as Holten from District Committee, a higher level in the Party organization than the Branch. Holten says that Liz has been invited to a special meeting as a gesture of goodwill. Liz looks to Frau Ebert, who she does not want to offend, but Frau Ebert says she should go. Holten says they must leave tonight, and will stop at Frau Ebert's to collect Liz's belongings. They will then drive to Górlitz, which is near the Polish border. As Liz gets into the car, she reflects that it has a military look to it.

*Liz continues to push aside her concern about the odd circumstances involving her invitation to Leipzig. It does not occur to her that only seven people attended the meeting because it was planned as a decoy, to keep her from suspecting that there is some other reason why she was summoned to East Germany. Although she knows something strange is afoot, she wants very badly not to become disillusioned with the Communist Party, and so allows herself to be carried away by Holten.*



## CHAPTER 20: TRIBUNAL

The Tribunal takes place in a small courtroom. Leamas sits in the back, in his own clothes, while Mundt is in the front of the room, in prison clothing. Fiedler presents his case by saying that he and Leamas were arrested on the day he submitted his report about Mundt to the Praesidium and pressured to confess to having plotted to frame Mundt. Fiedler says that the fact that Leamas, a defector, will refuse to accept that Mundt is a British agent proves Leamas's impartiality. Fiedler says he will interpret the report he already prepared in his remarks and that Mundt has committed the worst possible crime, and the penalty is death.

Fiedler continues his speech, giving a summary of Mundt's career. He describes Mundt as having been a talented and successful agent in Norway, Sweden, and Finland early in his career. Later, when Mundt became a British agent, he would travel to these countries to collect payments from the British. Fiedler fervently says that Mundt's greed was what got him caught, which should be a lesson to other enemies of the state. From 1956, Mundt worked in London, where he exposed himself to great dangers. A warrant was issued for his arrest, but he managed to fly from London to Berlin.

Mundt's brilliant escape from London, Fiedler contends, would never have been possible if Mundt had not been allowed to leave by the British authorities after they captured him and turned him into their agent. After this, the British promoted Mundt's career, and they may have even helped Mundt to kill their own less-important agents to help him succeed. Fiedler also presents other evidence suggesting that Mundt may have given intelligence about the British to the Abteilung to keep his organization's trust.

Fiedler then calls Leamas to the witness stand. Leamas testifies that he heard from Peter Guillam that there was no full search for Mundt when he was in London, but that it would have been impossible for Mundt to have been a British agent without his knowing about it. Leamas also testifies about the logistics surrounding Rolling Stone, and Fiedler draws attention to the fact that money was pulled from the bank in Helsinki during a period when Mundt was there.

*As Leamas has observed earlier, Fiedler sees Leamas's own repeated denial that it would be impossible for the Circus to run an agent out of East Germany without his knowledge as proof that Leamas is not trying to frame Mundt. Leamas is the defector who remains loyal to the facts as he knows them, while Mundt, in Fiedler's view, is only loyal to his own survival and interests and constantly manipulates the facts in order to protect himself.*



*In the Communist countries of the time, most people lived with few material comforts. This was justified in ideological terms, as a sacrifice that would need to be made temporarily until the Communist system got off the ground. To frame Mundt's crime in ideologically damning terms, Fiedler says that Mundt betrayed his country out of a greedy impatience for wealth.*



*Fiedler describes a cynical give-and-take between the Circus and their highly ranked spy in the Abteilung. The Circus will betray its own agents (like Karl Riemeck), giving Mundt permission to kill them, to help Mundt. The British, he believes, may even have willingly given information to Mundt to give to the Abteilung so that Mundt would rise in the ranks.*



*Fiedler is drawing Leamas out so that he will show the weaknesses in his own argument. Leamas's stubborn inability to recognize that there might be things he does not know about the operation in Berlin makes him look exactly like the kind of agent who might be kept in the dark about the most secretive parts of an operation. He seems like a dispensable agent, who the Circus might not mind lying to.*



Leamas also testifies that Riemeck and Control met alone in his apartment in Berlin. Fiedler explains that the documents that the British received from Riemeck were not included in the files that Riemeck had access to. Instead, Fiedler says, Mundt passed the information to Riemeck to give to Leamas. Mundt also promoted Riemeck's career every year after his return from Britain in 1959. Fiedler says that Riemeck could not have found De Jong's car in the woods, unless someone higher up in the chain of command ordered the Security police to follow De Jong's car and someone told Riemeck De Jong's whereabouts. One of the three members of the Tribunal asks why Mundt killed Riemeck, if he was his agent, and Fiedler responds that once Riemeck was under suspicion, Mundt had him killed to protect himself.

Fiedler describes Mundt's technique. He says that the British were likely hesitant to trust Mundt at first, fearing that he would become a double agent. At first, he had no network. But by the end of 1959, Mundt informed London that he had found Riemeck, a man in the Praesidium who could be his intermediary to London. In Mundt's position, he had access to all personnel files, could tap phones, and read mail. This, Fiedler says, allowed him to determine who on the Praesidium might be open to spying for the British. Fiedler concludes, saying that for Mundt's crime, death would be a merciful punishment.

## CHAPTER 21: THE WITNESS

Karden, Mundt's lawyer, makes an opening statement. He says that it is consistent with British practice to try to frame Mundt with a great deal of circumstantial evidence. Fiedler has either been tricked into believing in Mundt's guilt, or he is himself a part of the British plot. Mundt, Karden explains, was aware that Fiedler has been plotting against him and even authorized recruiting Leamas as a defector. Mundt read in Peters' report that Leamas had made deposits in Denmark and Finland at times coinciding with his visits there, and understood that Fiedler and the British were planning his murder. To prepare himself, Mundt had Leamas followed while Leamas was living in Bayswater and working at the library, to see if Leamas ever revealed to anyone that he was living a double life. During that period, Leamas made one crucial mistake. Karden says he will call that witness—after he questions Leamas.

*Fiedler describes a system that was meant to protect Mundt, but also to keep Leamas in the dark regarding Mundt's involvement, as an extra precaution against Mundt's being discovered. The Circus only shows loyalty to Mundt as part of this system, because he is the most valuable asset they have in East Germany. Riemeck and even Leamas himself, perhaps, are not provided with the same protection, or filled in on the true nature of the network. Riemeck, who Leamas oversaw (and maybe Elvira as well), actually knew more about the operation in East Germany than Leamas did, because Riemeck at least knew about Mundt's involvement.*



*Fiedler says that Mundt was trusted and had access to all the personnel files, so he was able to carefully assess who to bring in to help him spy for the British. Mundt was high-ranking and highly trusted, despite the murky circumstances that surrounded his escape from London. This bias to trust Mundt is likely a consequence of Mundt's secure place among the elite. He looks and acts the part of a German leader, and so he is trusted to behave as one.*



*Karden's theory of the case is in line with Leamas's understanding of the mission he was sent on. As far as Leamas knows, he was sent to frame Mundt, to make it seem like he was actually a British agent so that the East Germans would kill him. But now Karden reveals that Mundt has been aware of Leamas's plan ever since Leamas worked in the Banking department. Mundt, according to Karden, knew about Leamas's behavior when Leamas acted like a disaffected drunk who would be happy to defect. He saw through this and had Leamas followed in order to collect evidence that all Leamas's behavior was a plot against Mundt. The "crucial mistake" Karden references seems to mean Liz.*



Karden calls Leamas to testify. He asks him if he has any money, or friends who would lend him money. Leamas scoffs, saying that he defected because he was broke. Karden asks if Leamas is a good friend of George Smiley's. Leamas says he knows Smiley, but has not seen him since leaving prison. Karden asks Leamas where he went after lunching with Ashe, suggesting that Leamas went to Smiley's house. Leamas says he probably went to a pub, but does not remember. Karden asks again whether Smiley might have wanted to help Leamas. Leamas denies this, saying he and Smiley are completely dissimilar.

Karden then asks Leamas if he was broke when he asked Ford the grocer for credit, and Leamas says he was. Karden asks why Leamas never collected his final wages from the library. Leamas is startled that Karden knows this, but says it was likely because the library was closed on Saturday mornings. When Leamas finishes testifying, Liz is brought into the courtroom.

*After Leamas left the Banking department, he did everything in his power to seem as though he was entirely without means. Leamas suggests that he could never be friends with someone like Smiley, and Smiley would never care what happened to him, because he is from a working-class background and Smiley is from the upper class. Leamas sticks to his role as a forgetful drunk when he explains that he does not remember where he went after his lunch with Ashe.*



*Leamas is unnerved that he may have created an inconsistency in his performance of the role of an angry and impoverished drunk by failing to go to collect his wages from the library. Once again, he is caught off guard by how much the East Germans know. Finally, Liz's appearance as a witness is a terrible revelation for both her and Leamas.*



## CHAPTER 22: THE PRESIDENT

Liz enters and is surprised to see Leamas. The President of the tribunal begins to address Liz, asking when she joined the party. Suddenly Leamas cries out, "you bastards! Leave her alone!" and is hit by a guard. Liz is terrified. The President says Leamas will be escorted out of the courtroom if he talks out of turn. The President continues to lecture Liz, telling her that she must be very honest to "help the cause of Socialism." Liz asks if Leamas is the one on trial, but the President will not tell her, saying that her ignorance guarantees that she will answer truthfully.

Karden begins to question Liz. He asks her if she and Leamas were lovers, and if she has had many lovers. Leamas yells in outrage at this insinuation, but Liz turns and tells him not to yell, or he will be taken away. Karden asks if Leamas knew Liz was a Communist, and she says that Leamas laughed when she told him, and seemed to be above it. Liz feels deeply unsure how to answer the questions because she does not know what the trial is about, and she fears doing anything to hurt Leamas.

Karden continues, asking Liz why she thinks Leamas hit Ford the grocer. Liz says she doesn't know. Karden asks if she thinks Leamas planned to hit Ford, and Liz says no—but too quickly. Karden smiles at her condescendingly. He asks when she last saw Leamas, and she says she last saw him the night before he fought with Ford and that she had been cooking for Leamas while he was ill.

*In the same way that Fiedler contended that Leamas's ignorance of Mundt's actual role in spying for the Circus guaranteed the authenticity of his testimony, the President now refuses to give Liz any context into what case is being tried. At the same time, the President appeals to Liz's loyalty to Communism, which calls for putting the needs of the collective over personal loyalties, like Liz's to Leamas.*



*Leamas has no way of protecting Liz in this context, and Liz does not know how to answer the questions in order to protect Leamas. She wants to believe that the Communists are good, but she can see that Leamas is being held and threatened by them. Karden's attempts to demean Liz with the suggestion that she is promiscuous also do not fit in with her expectations for Communist behavior.*



*Liz guesses that she ought to hide her suspicion that Leamas had planned to hit Ford, but in her panicked state, she does this clumsily and reveals what she really thinks. Seeing that Karden saw through her lie, she gives more information than Karden has asked for, revealing that she was taking care of Leamas.*



Karden asks Liz if she had enough money to take care of Leamas, and Liz says that Leamas gave her money. Karden seems interested in this, so Liz tries to change her story, saying that Leamas had very little money, so little that after he was gone a friend came and paid off his bills. Karden asks Liz if she ever met the friend who had paid the bills. She says no, and that Leamas had never mentioned a friend. There is a terrible silence in the courtroom. Karden begins asking Liz questions about her wages and rent. He asks if she has paid her rent lately, and she says she has not. Beginning to cry, she explains that a charity sent her a lease worth a thousand pounds. Karden asks if she thought that it came from Leamas or his friends, and she nods through her tears. She says she also heard that Ford the grocer was paid a large sum after the trial.

Karden next asks if anyone got in touch with Liz after Leamas went to prison. Liz lies and says no, but then admits she did have visitors when Karden says her neighbors saw two men visit her. He asks if these men were casual lovers like Leamas. Sobbing, Liz says they were friends of Leamas's. A man named George Smiley left his card. Addressing the court, Karden says that Smiley went to Liz to check if Leamas had told her too much, and then says that Leamas made the same mistake Riemack did by confiding in a woman.

Karden continues questioning Liz. He asks why she never visited Leamas in prison, asking if she had found another lover. She says that Leamas had made her promise not to follow him. Karden says that this shows that Leamas expected to go to prison and asks if Leamas broke up with her the night before he hit Ford. Liz says he had said there was something he needed to do and he would come back, but that she would be looked after. Karden asks if this was why she was not surprised when she received the lease. Sobbing, Liz asks why they are questioning her, if they already know everything. Karden concludes his testimony, saying that Liz's testimony has proved that Leamas was part of a plot against Mundt.

Leamas thinks that London must have been insane to compromise his mission in this way. He had even told them to leave Liz alone. He wonders if it was Smiley's conscience that prompted him to take care of everyone. Now the only thing left for him to do, he thinks, is try to save Liz and Fiedler. He wonders how Karden knows so much. He is sure that he was not followed to Smiley's house after the lunch with Ashe, and the story about his having stolen money from the Circus, which Mundt had mentioned while interrogating him, had only been meant to be spread around within the organization. Leamas stands up and walks to the front of the courtroom.

*Karden continues to use Liz's ignorance of the substance of the trial to draw incriminating facts out of her. He is proving through Liz's testimony that not only did Leamas have money when he was pretending to be broke, but he also had powerful friends looking after him. These friends have the resources to even look after Liz as well. For anyone versed in Communist ideology like the members of the Tribunal, the gift of an apartment to Liz suggests the wastefulness, corruption, and wealth of a Capitalist government service like the Circus, which spends taxpayer money on keeping its spies' lovers comfortable.*



*Liz is caught in another lie, and now gives the final piece of evidence that contradicts Leamas's testimony: she was visited by George Smiley. In a remark that seems calculated to hurt Leamas (and bring things full circle in the novel's narrative), Karden says that Leamas let his love of a woman and desire to connect with her cloud his judgment as a spy.*



*Liz thought that the apartment lease was a sign of Leamas's continued concern about her wellbeing, but it was actually given to her to guarantee that she would undermine Leamas with her testimony during the Tribunal and get Mundt acquitted. Liz knows that she is somehow hurting Leamas despite her good intentions, but does not understand what she could do differently to protect him. She has been manipulated by both the Circus and the Communist Tribunal (as has Leamas himself).*



*Leamas is astounded that the Circus went against the agreed-upon plan in this way, creating evidence that he was still working for them and drawing Liz into that plan. He cannot understand how Karden and Mundt know certain things about his activities in London, but he is too emotionally drained to understand that the Circus's true betrayal was to send him on a mission he believed had one purpose, but really had the opposite purpose.*



## CHAPTER 23: CONFESSION

Leamas asks the court to let Liz go home, but the President insists that she be kept in custody until the hearing ends, saying that Fiedler may want to question her. Fiedler and Liz's eyes meet and he seems to see that she is a fellow Jew and to sympathize with her. Fiedler says that Leamas is right, she can go, and then escorts her to the door. Leamas will not meet Liz's eyes as she leaves the room, and she sobs uncontrollably as she is led out.

Leamas testifies that Karden was right: he was sent by the Circus to frame Mundt. They came up with all the details to incriminate Mundt. Leamas tries to make an excuse for Fiedler, saying he is not the only man who wanted Mundt dead. Leamas goes on to say that Smiley had always said something could go wrong, but that it was crazy for him to jeopardize the mission by paying his bills. He continues, saying that everyone did hate Mundt and want him dead, but that Fiedler had nothing to with the plot, although they knew that he would not want to protect Mundt because Fiedler is a Jew and Mundt is an anti-Semite. He goes on to describe the way Mundt tormented Fiedler, mocking him for his Judaism when he had him in custody.

Fiedler asks Leamas whether he believes that he really messed up the operation by falling for Liz. He says that it's odd that Smiley sent money to Ford the grocer and bought the lease for Liz, if it was a plot to frame Mundt. Leamas shrugs and says that the Circus never expected that he would be brought to East Germany, and that he was a fool not to think Mundt might call in Liz to testify. Fiedler says that Mundt knew a great deal, even that Liz received the lease. After a moment's hesitation, Mundt said he found out about the lease after Liz increased her party contribution.

The President says that the Tribunal is ready to make its report, and that Fiedler will be fired. The President continues, saying that another court will determine Leamas's punishment. Then she looks at Mundt, who is staring at Fiedler. At that moment, Leamas suddenly understands "the whole ghastly trick."

## CHAPTER 24: THE COMMISSAR

Liz is in an office in the prison. The Prison Wardress gives her food, but Liz is too exhausted and overwhelmed to eat. Liz asks where she is, and the wardress tells her she is in a prison for enemies of the state. The wardress says that to create a Communist society, they must do away with individualism. This is a prison for counter-revolutionary intellectuals.

*Liz and Fiedler are Jews living in two societies that pretend to accept them, but are anti-Semitic to their core. They have a moment of shared sympathy, and Fiedler decides not to interrogate Liz any further. He may feel that she has been treated badly enough already, and he sees that his fight to prove Mundt's guilt is likely going to lead to his own downfall, whether or not he gets her to testify.*



*Leamas believes that by confessing to the details of his mission, he may be able to save Fiedler from being blamed for London's plot against Mundt and killed. He believes that he is now shedding his role, as he tells the truth about what the Circus instructed him to do. It does not occur to him that this confession was another part of the plan that he was never filled in on. He also draws attention to Mundt's prejudice against Fiedler, although this will probably make the Tribunal even less sympathetic to Fiedler, as so many of them are anti-Semitic themselves.*



*Fiedler sees the truth that Leamas still cannot. The Circus sent Leamas on a mission to create suspicion that Mundt was a British spy, but then, unbeknownst to Leamas, sabotaged that mission. They did this because Mundt is, in fact, a British agent, and they wanted to draw suspicion away from him. Leamas fails to understand that the Circus messed up the mission deliberately, or why they might have wanted to do so.*



*At the very moment when it's too late, Leamas finally understands what Fiedler had been suggesting for some time. He sees that he was not sent to frame Mundt, but to frame Fiedler.*



*While Liz's experience in the courtroom was bleak, it was also incomprehensible. In her conversation with the Wardress, Liz sees the depths of cruelty that being an "ideologically pure" Communist can drive people to.*



Liz asks who will be shot next, and the Prison Wardress says that Leamas and the Jew Fiedler will be executed. She says Leamas will be shot because he killed a guard, and Fiedler because he accused a loyal comrade. She continues, saying that Mundt knows what to do with Jews. Then she eats the food that Liz could not eat. Liz cannot stop thinking about Leamas averting his eyes from her. She feels she failed him, but does not know how she could have acted differently. She also feels guilty that she seems to have caused Fiedler's death, although she feels comforted to know that Leamas and Fiedler are on the same side. Liz asks the wardress why they are waiting, and the wardress answers that it is to see whether she must stay. The phone rings, and the wardress tells Liz that Mundt has ordered that she stay in the prison. The Wardress takes Liz to a prison cell.

In the middle of the night, footsteps approach Liz's cell. Mundt is in the corridor, and he tells Liz to come with him. Liz is terrified, and he takes her arm and roughly escorts her out of the prison. It seems to Liz as if he is trying to move through the prison undetected. They exit into a garden and she sees Leamas standing by a car. Mundt talks to Leamas, then leads Liz to him. "She's trash, like Fiedler," are Mundt's last words to them before he walks away.

Leamas tells Liz to get into the car, and starts driving. Liz asks why Mundt is letting them go, since they are enemies. Leamas says they need to reach Berlin in five hours. Liz asks what will happen to Fiedler, and Leamas says he will be shot. Liz continues asking questions, and finally Leamas bursts out with an explanation. He tells her that Mundt is a British agent, and that Leamas had been sent on this operation to remove the one person who was beginning to suspect the truth: Fiedler.

## CHAPTER 25: THE WALL

As they drive through the night, Liz asks Leamas what her part was in the operation. Leamas says that Fiedler was too powerful to be taken down by Mundt alone. London saw that Fiedler needed to be discredited entirely, not just killed, to save Mundt's position. Still driving, Leamas tries to overtake a **lorry** and then must brake hard to avoid a crash. He continues, saying that he was prepared to become an alcoholic wreck and punch Ford to kill Mundt, which is what he thought the mission was.

*Liz struggles to accept how little control she has had over her role in the events of the Tribunal. She still does not understand what the Tribunal was about, but she is wracked by feelings of guilt. She was too ignorant of the situation to act differently in a way that would have been loyal to Leamas, but she still feels that the effect of her actions was a betrayal both of Leamas and of a fellow Jew, Fiedler. She also sees that, although the Wardress sees herself as devoted to the Communist ideology, she is perfectly willing to express anti-Semitic views. Liz is learning that the society she believed to be ideal is far from it.*



*Liz fears she is about to be killed or tortured by the anti-Semitic Mundt, but he is actually delivering her to Leamas and (at least temporary) safety. Because he is an agent of the Circus, he is under orders to oversee Leamas's escape, and Leamas is obviously too loyal to Liz to leave without her.*



*Leamas's gruffness conceals his humiliation and heartbreak at having been deceived by the Circus and used to take down Fiedler, a man who had pledged to look after him. Adding to this humiliation, Leamas earnestly despises Mundt for murdering all his agents and he is ashamed to admit to Liz that he has been unwittingly working to save Mundt and kill Fiedler all along.*



*Leamas fails to answer Liz's question. He is drained and devastated by the experience he just had and can only think about the stunning revelation he has come to about the true nature of his mission. At this moment, he nearly crashes into another lorry, an image that recalls Leamas's desperate feeling that he is being crushed by forces more powerful than himself.*



Liz asks Leamas if he also made love to her for the mission. He says he did not. He goes on to say that it was his job to make them think what was actually true: that Mundt was a British spy. Then, once his plot was uncovered, Mundt would be safe. Liz asks how they could have known that she and Leamas would fall for one another. Leamas says it didn't matter. The Circus had a man in the Labor Exchange, Pitt, set him up to work at the library with her, because they knew she was a Communist and would accept the invitation to Germany. Then, even if they did not have a relationship, Mundt's defense would have been able to make it look as if they had been involved, especially because Smiley went to call on Liz. Liz says she feels dirty and used.

Liz asks Leamas why she is being released from the prison. She says she is a risk now, if she goes back to England, because she knows so much and is a Party member. Leamas says that he imagines Mundt will secure his position by blaming their escape on someone else. Liz asks if he really doesn't care that Fiedler and other innocent people will be killed. Leamas says it makes him sick, but all that matters to spy agencies is success. Liz says Leamas is trying to convince himself not to feel guilty for getting Fiedler—who was a good man—executed. Leamas gets angry and says that the Communists usually find it justifiable to sacrifice individuals for the good of the collective. He says she is right, that Mundt must have promised the British to get her out, but of course did not care whether she lived or died.

Liz objects to the way the spy services used her love for Leamas, saying that this amounts to turning the humanity in people into a weapon. Leamas says that this is just the way spies work, and that their goal is to protect civilians. Liz insists that the spies are worse than everyone else. Leamas says that he hates the deceit and sacrifice of innocents that come with spy work, but what they have gone through is insignificant, because the whole world is full of people killing one another both in wars like **World War II** and in genocides. Liz remembers the Prison Wardress saying that they are in “a prison for those who slow down the march” towards a Communist society.

Leamas sees a man on the road and picks him up. The man instructs them as they drive. He says he will show them where to climb over the **Berlin Wall**. Leamas, he says, should go first, then pull Liz up after him. They will only have ninety seconds, and they must climb over at a specific moment. The man tells Leamas to drive in a series of convoluted directions. When they arrive, the man tells them that the barbed wire is cut in the place where they should climb. Leamas tells the man not to drive the car away until they're over, but once they are out of the car the man immediately drives away.

*Leamas believed that by connecting with Liz, he was potentially placing the mission in danger, as he believed Karl Riembeck had done. Instead, his love affair with Liz was another part of the mission that he did not know was planned, but which he executed nonetheless. Leamas had thought that he was playing a role, but the Circus was counting on him to fail to play that role at certain moments – by establishing a relationship with Liz and by confessing to try to save Fiedler – in order to fulfill their true plan.*



*Liz intuits that it is strange for the Circus to ask Mundt to help her to survive and return to England, given how much she now knows about the British secret service's methods. Leamas, meanwhile, is in too much shock from the upending of his understanding about the last few months of his life to process what is happening now. He clings to the belief that Communists are just as bad, or worse, than those he works with, despite having learned that the man he reviles most is working on the “good” side. He admits, however, that Mundt certainly views Liz's life as of no importance.*



*In the final reckoning, Liz does not believe that individuals should be sacrificed or abused in the name of creating a better or safer society, although she is a Communist and this is allowed for by Communist ideology. Leamas, on the other hand, sees his own individual sacrifices as helping to avoid even larger numbers of casualties by those who follow ideologies to the letter. He hates that Liz is involved in this dirty fight, but still clings to the belief that his work is somehow making the world a better place.*



*Leamas was told by Mundt to pick up this man. But while the man guides them to the Wall, he also seeks to confuse and alarm Leamas. Leamas is already traumatized by having seen Karl Riembeck shot as he tried to cross from the Eastern to the Western side of Berlin. Mundt has likely asked the man guiding Leamas to do this deliberately, so that Leamas feels unsure what is in his control and what will be decided for him by powerful outside forces.*



## CHAPTER 26: IN FROM THE COLD

Standing thirty yards from the **Berlin Wall**, Liz and Leamas wait until the beam of a searchlight stops in front of them. Then Leamas takes Liz's arm and they move towards the wall. Leamas holds Liz very close, as if he is scared Mundt will find a way to snatch her away at the last moment. Leamas finds the spot on the wall and quickly hoists himself to the top, then leans back down to Liz and tells her to climb.

As Liz begins to climb the **Berlin Wall**, searchlights come on all around them and Liz's body starts to swing wildly in the air. Almost falling off the wall himself, Leamas pulls Liz towards him, when suddenly three or four shots ring out and Leamas feels Liz's body shudder. From the other side of the wall, he hears Smiley's voice, telling him to jump over, and asking him where the girl is.

Leamas hesitates, then climbs back to the Eastern side of the wall. He sees that Liz is dead, and looks at how her **hair** lies across her face. The guards seem to hesitate, but then they shoot him. The last thought Leamas has before he dies is of a small car being crashed between **lorries** and children waving through a car window.

*Leamas is too emotionally drained to worry much about himself, but he is acutely aware of the risks of climbing over the wall and fears for Liz's safety. He is specifically fearful that, even though Mundt is a British agent, he may betray and abuse Leamas as he did by killing Karl Riemeck and by framing Fiedler.*



*Liz had been right when she said she knew too much to be allowed to return to England, but her death represents a final betrayal of Leamas by the organization he has dedicated his life to serving. Smiley's involvement, however, remains ambiguous. It's unclear whether he knew the part he played in the operation to expose Leamas as a British spy to the Germans, and whether he knows as he yells to Leamas that Liz will be killed, or if he too was betrayed by Control into going on a mission he never meant to go on.*



*Leamas realizes that Liz is dead, and his grief intensifies his feeling of connection to her. At this bleak moment, he realizes that the way that the impersonal forces of the spy services crush individuals (like trucks crushing smaller vehicles) is not tolerable to him, and that he would rather die with Liz than continue to be a part of the fight between two ideologically opposed, but equally morally bankrupt systems.*





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