



ELIZA BURNETT IS SENT ON A MISSION

SPY

games

IF YOU EVER FELT LIKE MI6 MISSED A TRICK BY NOT RECRUITING YOU AND YEARN FOR THE CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE THE LIFE OF AN UNDERCOVER AGENT THEN A WEEKEND SPENT WITH SECRET ME WILL SURELY FULFIL YOUR EVERY FANTASY. JAM PACKED WITH ACTIVITIES AND INFORMATION THAT WILL MAKE YOUR EYES POP I CAN PROMISE THAT LIFE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN.

The 'money can't buy' tag is often applied too liberally these days but in this instance it is almost true. You may have the spare £10,000 necessary burning a hole in your pocket, but if you don't pass their rigorous security vetting it is game over before you can say 'shaken not stirred'.

My own personal interest in espionage comes not from watching James Bond, Jason Bourne or even reading John Le Carré, but from hearing about my own grandfather's wartime activities. I could tell you more – but you know the drill! Anyway, when an opportunity arose to experience Phase 1 of Secret Me's missions I jumped at the chance.

The clue lies in the name and the weekend was operated under a strict veil of secrecy starting with our helicopter ride to an undisclosed location which, without giving too much away, was a beautiful, exclusive country estate - a perfect setting for wannabe Bonds.

These weekends are genuinely exclusive and only eight recruits are invited on any one mission. My fellow agents came from a variety of professions and backgrounds - a restaurateur, a TV presenter, an entrepreneur and a couple from the world of high finance - all united in the common goal of saving the world! And, while I



was the only girl taking part on this occasion I am assured plenty more have already signed up.

From the moment the helicopter touched down onto the perfectly manicured lawn at our exclusive retreat the weekend became a non-stop whirl of activity. Straight into a class on self-defence and threat awareness, we kicked, punched and yelled at each other for a good couple of hours while being instructed by 5th Dan Black Belt experts in Mixed Martial Arts. They have experience teaching all sorts of people from law enforcement, the military and even children from disadvantaged backgrounds. By the end the adrenaline was running so high we felt we could take on the world.

Be prepared to spend a lot of time outdoors. There were two sessions using pistols and rifles



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(the Sig Sauer X5 and a variant of the AR15) with expert tuition offered by professionals that train our military elite. No prior experience is necessary but apparently we achieved as much in six hours as Sandhursts' trainee officers accomplish in as many weeks – the learning curve and pace were extraordinary. At sunrise we were simply learning to aim and yet by lunchtime we were running through undergrowth and jumping through smoke bombs eliminating threats and rescuing hostages.

Another skill in being a top-notch agent is the art of surveillance. Here our tutors were top flight members of well-known agencies who must remain nameless due to their on-going work. After some theory instruction we were let loose in the field tracking a target. Now, following someone around a town can sound pretty boring but hooked up to discreet ear pieces, using top-of-the range kit and working as a team actually turned out to be unexpectedly thrilling and more difficult than expected.

Outdoor pursuits were intermingled with indoor sessions: from learning how to avoid your drink being spiked, to being a shark at the poker table – all essential skills to be a well-rounded agent. There was also a Seduction & Persuasion session with the exotically named Immodesty Blaize who certainly taught the men amongst us a thing or two about judging a book by its cover.

From time to time the Secret Me team throw

a curve ball into proceedings so it was imperative to always be on your guard.

There is a more serious side to the weekend as most of these life skills we were learning can be applicable to daily life. With corporate espionage on the rise, a crash course in Kidnap and Ransom coupled with an insight of just how vulnerable we are online, through our computers and mobile phones, gave food for thought stretching way beyond the course.

But the weekend was also steeped in luxury; opulent surroundings, black tie dinners, sumptuous food and sparkling company – there was really never a dull moment.

The Secret Me team is headed up by Sara Fazlali with her business partner, a former UK Special Forces officer. Sara's expertise lies in both war zones and in the world of luxury making for a perfect partnership.

After the mission is complete the participants are each given a personal assessment in the form of a report card. I don't dare show my parents as mine was very reminiscent of my old school reports – capable but could do better! After passing Phase 1, Phases 2 and 3 are on the horizon but command far higher price tags with exotic locations and week-long missions.

So, if life has got a little mundane and you are looking for something to get your heart racing then get your application in quick to Secret Me...I guarantee you will not be disappointed.

<http://s.secret.me>

