

PREMIERE ISSUE!

ESPIONAGE

MAGAZINE

December 1984

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Ron Goulart

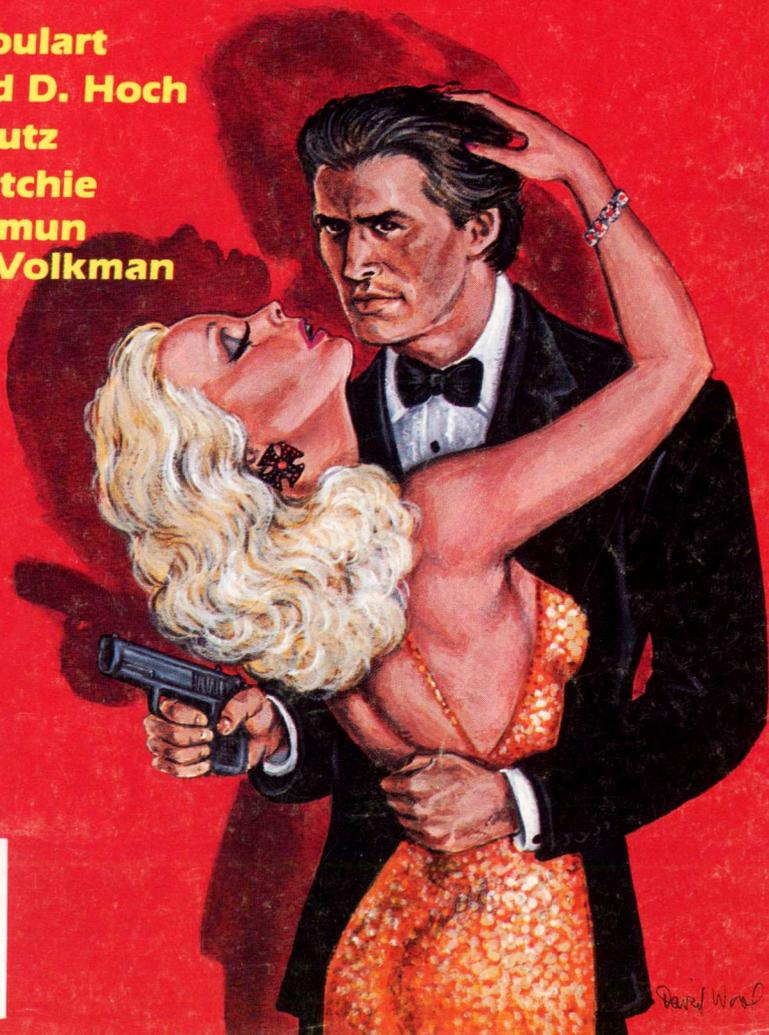
Edward D. Hoch

John Lutz

Jack Ritchie

Isak Romun

Ernest Volkman



David Wood

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Mail Order Sales
SMI Publishers Representatives Inc.
800 Second Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017
(212) 599-2180
Mr. John Romano

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EDITORIAL...

There aren't too many thrills that equal that of giving birth to a new magazine...especially a new magazine that is also the start of a new genre! We are in this fortunate position — deliberately — because we, the publishers and editors of **ESPIONAGE**, *love* spy stories...can't get enough of them. And can't always find the time to read a novel — almost their only presentation to date!

We love mystery/detective and science fiction stories as well, and therefore you will occasionally find a spy/sci fi (couldn't resist the rhyme!) or a spy/mystery story mixed in among the pure-bred espionage pieces that we'll be presenting to you six times a year (to start).

We hope that you love spy stories.
And we hope that you'll love
ESPIONAGE Magazine, too.



ESPIONAGE

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In this Issue...

- Page 6 Time to Kill**
by Tony Willmot
- Page 16 The Queen & King**
by Isaac Asimov
- Page 24 The President's Brain Is Missing**
by Ron Goulart
- Page 39 The Purist**
by Edward Wellen
- Page 48 The Hurricane Courler**
by P.E. Halycon
- Page 58 The Foreign Minister's Brother**
by Stuart Symons
- Page 69 The Commissar**
by Jack Ritchie
- Page 78 Historically Spying...**
by Joe Lewis
- Page 81 A Boy and His Camera**
by Jerry Tillotson

table of contents

Volume 1, Number 1



Breakfast at The Kawnbawza Page 92
by Isak Romun

About Books... Page 96
a review

The Hatchtree Asslgnment Page 100
by Edward D. Hoch

The Knack Page 115
by Percy Spurlark Parker

The Intellgence Process Page 118
by Ernest Volkman

Winds of Change Page 128
by John Lutz

A Cameo Disappearance Page 134
by E. Brooks Peters

You Can't Fool A Wife Page 152
by Ardath Mayhar

Game Pages Page 158

TIME TO KILL

by Tony Wilmot

You've got to kill. In cold blood. Within 24 hours. The very thought of it makes the adrenalin burn through your veins like acid. There's no turning back; it's what you're paid to do, part of the job. "A political expediency" was the cliché Control selected from its library of euphemisms. Put that way it didn't seem so bad. But now the day of execution is almost here. And whatever word you — they — use, it's still murder . . .

The two men and the girl were sitting outside a cafe in a fashionable part of the city's Western Sector. The afternoon sun was hot and the wide pavements shimmered. At a nearby table, two hausfraus were spooning schlagober gateau into their fleshy mouths, oblivious to the traffic's roar

and the tourists who herded past, eyes glazed with fatigue and excitement.

As a waiter set down their drinks, Mark Girland was saying, "I got out of uniform the moment the war in Vietnam ended. And from Army Intelligence I got into this racket." He grinned. "Out of the frying pan into the fire."

Steve Dunning had been listening to Girland with increasing irritation. "The cream of America's youth got caught up in Vietnam, pal. Like you, I was one of them. But we were lucky; a lot of guys never came back. It's over, so can it, will you."

Mark Girland smiled. "Hit a raw nerve did I? Sorry. Just making conversation." He feigned indifference but inwardly he was gloating;



annoying Dunning was oddly satisfying.

Nadine Kurtz allowed her thoughts to wander. Men who reminisced about war-time experiences bored her. She was concerned only with the present. The past couldn't be altered, so dwelling on it was futile. But she knew Steve expected her to show some interest in Mark Girland, so she shrugged, saying, "Vietnam doesn't mean very much to me. I was just leaving school when it ended."

"You were lucky," Mark Girland went on. "It must rate as one of the costliest wars ever. Over a million people killed . . . cost the U.S. government 28 million dollars a day . . . and what did it prove?"

As Girland developed his theme, Steve studied Nadine's flawless features. A few freckles on her forehead marred an otherwise perfect skin; yet their presence added to her beauty. Eyes blue, flecked with grey and wide-set; mouth small but sensuous; shortish blond hair with a soft filmy quality in sunlight. Age? Late twenties, he guessed.

He was becoming involved. He knew it, she knew it. It was dangerous to form attachments in his business. It was one of the cardinal sins of Control. After his marriage had broken up, Steve thought emotional involvement couldn't happen again: He simply wouldn't let it. But he had.

Lighting a cigarette, Mark Girland said casually, "You both know why I've been sent here, of course."

Steve downed his whiskey; he was liking the man less by the second. "We've heard rumors."

Mark Girland followed a passing girl with his eyes, whistling softly. "The frauleins are everything they're reputed to be, eh?" He winked at Steve. "No need to turn the bedroom light off."

"Get to the point," Nadine said testily.

"Patience, my dear. There's no rush. We have all day." Mark Girland drew on his cigarette, exhaled luxuriously; a man who knew he held all the high cards. "Control is worried. They don't like weak links. They make them nervous. But, that's only reasonable, isn't it? They can't afford to take chances."

"And you," Steve said, "have been sent to find out which of us is a weak link. We are the prime suspects after all."

"I wouldn't put it as strongly as that."

"Oh? How would you put it?"

Nadine broke in gently. "What Mr. Girland means, Steve, is that he just wants to reassure himself we can be trusted. Isn't that so, Mr. Girland?"

"Why sure. There's no need to get paranoid, Steve. Like the lady says it's . . ."

"Who's getting paranoid!" Steve cut in. He cursed himself the moment he uttered the words. Idiotti-

cally, he felt himself coloring under Mark Girland's amused gaze. His stomach began to flutter; fear had always affected him that way. Who was the weak link if not himself? He'd broken the cardinal rule by getting emotionally involved with Nadine.

It was too late for wishing it hadn't happened. In any case, he was glad it had. It showed he was still human, not just a series of facts on a computer print-out.

"The Keitel job," Steve asked presently. "Is it off? Control has been very silent on that score lately."

"On the contrary," Mark Girland said, "it's very much on. But I shall be coming along for the ride, okay?"

"Do we have a choice?"

Mark Girland smiled, signalled to the waiter. "Let's have another drink. To the success of the Keitel job."

As she sipped her drink, Nadine scrutinized Mark Girland's rugged face. There was a hint of cruelty in the eyes. What was the flaw in his character — drink, women, money? Everyone had an Achilles' heel, even Control's top fieldman. And what had he meant by "weak link"? Her affair with Steve? Or something more?

"We have 13 hours left," Steve said, checking his watch. "Time to move."

Mark Girland settled the bill. "My place," he said, as they strolled toward the next intersection. "Tonight. Eight o'clock. Here's the

address." He handed Steve a piece of paper, nodded, and walked off quickly, mingling with the crowds.

"He knows about us." Steve began to fidget with his cigarette lighter, resisting the urge to light up again. He'd managed to cut his smoking to two packs a day. Then, aware Nadine was disapproving of his nervousness, he slipped the lighter in his pocket. She knows a lot about me, he thought, but not everything. There were some things he'd never told anybody. Just as there were things she probably hadn't told him. Why, for one, had she chosen to work for Control instead of marrying and having kids? With her looks she could have had her pick. What motivated a woman like Nadine to risk her neck in counter-espionage?

"I said he knows about us."

"So?"

"So what do we do about him?"

"Nothing." She stubbed out her cigarette. "He doesn't have any proof. Control sent him to get it. So it's best if we don't stay together for a while."

"Nadine . . ." Steve reached for her hand.

"It's just as hard for me, Steve. Believe me, it's the best way."

"How long must we . . . ?" Steve tailed off miserably, trying not to visualize Nadine's hair splayed on the pillow beside him, trying to forget the way her fingers trickled over his body . . .

"I don't know. Not long. Just until

I can work something out."

Steve gave her a long hard look, sensing what was going through her mind. "Liquidate him? We'd never get away with it."

"We might. If we think it through properly. You want us to be together, don't you?"

"Of course I do. But . . ."

"Then there's no alternative."

T*en hours to zero. You're beginning to wonder if you have the guts to kill in cold blood. You've killed before, but never like this; never someone you cared about . . .*

Daylight had faded. Steve was in Klaus' bar (he and Nadine had had their first drink together there, so he had a nostalgic affection for the place). He dialed the number Nadine had given him, listening to it ring impotently at the other end.

He drummed his fingers on the window of the telephone booth. He wanted to hear her voice, talk to her, tell her about his premonition. The Keitel business stank. More so now that Mark Girland had been sent in as watchdog.

A voice answered "Census office" just as he was about to ring off. It was the cover for Control. "Miss Kurtz please," he said.

"I'm sorry. Miss Kurtz has left."

"I see. Has she been gone long?"

"About an hour. Is there a message?"

"No, thanks." Steve hung up. It

was just 7:20 pm. Nadine had said she would be at that number until 8 pm. His hunch had been right, something had gone wrong with the Keitel job.

Steve took a taxi to Mark Girland's address, a small commercial hotel near the railway terminal, unpretentious but comfortable (he'd stayed there once with Nadine). Girland was registered as M.G. Girland, technical salesman, Ansco Plastics, Detroit. Well, it made a change from automobiles.

The room was number 18 on the third floor. He could hear muffled voices inside. The voices stopped when he pressed the bell.

Mark Girland beckoned him inside, and Steve stepped into the room, stopping abruptly when he saw Nadine on the couch, pale and smoking nervously. Was it his imagination or was she avoiding his eye? Questions scurried around his mind like frightened rats. Why hadn't she phoned him to let him know she was going straight to Girland's hotel?

Mark Girland said, "Nadine couldn't let you know, Steve. Her phone's being tapped." If they were tapping her phone they must also be tapping his.

"I think the KGB are on to us, Steve." Nervous tension made Nadine's voice husky. A familiar tightening came into Steve's throat as he glanced at her stockingclad legs; danger always heightened his

desire for her.

"I managed to intercept a coded message from the Eastern Sector," Nadine said. "Keitel's going through the Wall earlier than we thought. And he'll be taken through in an armored van."

"That's not what we were told when we planned this operation," Steve said. "It's off then. Bullets can't penetrate armor plating."

Nadine was on her feet. "We can still do it."

"An armored van, Nadine? How, for God's sake?"

"That's your problem," Mark Girland said. "You're a trained marksman. Neither Nadine nor I can handle a precision rifle like you can. Control expects us to carry out the

execution, and there's no margin for error. No reprieve for failure. I'm telling you, Dunning, our lives won't be worth the proverbial nickel if we bungle this."

Mark Girland had been assembling a rifle with a telescopic sight. He handed it to Steve, smiling when Steve gasped in admiration as he tried it for balance. He raised it to firing position, pleased at the way it fitted comfortably into his shoulder. He adjusted the sight until it bisected a point between Mark Girland's eyes. The firing pin clicked as he squeezed the trigger.

Mark Girland smiled thinly. "Made in Belgium. Holds twelve shells. Can be set to single or automatic. The sights are accurate to



a thousandth of an inch, so nothing should go wrong. Keitel is a double agent. But the Russians have turned him. We want him dead before the KGB can get him into the Eastern Sector. Keitel knows too much about CIA operations in Europe. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly."

"Right. It's time we were moving. You, too, Nadine."

Steve hesitated, looking from Nadine to Mark Girland. Suddenly he didn't want her along when he did what he had to do. "Nadine stays here."

"No can do," Mark Girland said. "She has her orders, just like you and me."

"We can manage, Girland." Steve tried not to sound too anxious. "Lookout-man and trigger-man. We don't need a third operative along."

Nadine took Steve's arm. "He's right, Steve. I have my orders. I'm coming, too."

Steve nodded. Nadine was a professional; nothing he could say would change her mind.

So now it's closer, less than an hour away. Sure you're scared; it's only natural; you can even taste the fear. You've never had to kill in cold blood before . . . but there's always a first time for everything. And there's no room for sentiment. You were a fool to let yourself get involved. That makes it so much harder to do . . .

Nadine handled the Porsche coolly and expertly. A professional to her fingertips, Steve thought, as he looked at her profile illuminated by passing street lights. He'd often asked her how she had been recruited by Control; she had always evaded the question.

She lived a strange sort of existence. That was perhaps an inappropriate word, he reflected, but it certainly fit. Unmarried, devastatingly attractive, secretive; her entire being seemed to be an extension of Control. Her work obsessed her. Everything outside of work — eating, drinking, sleeping, making love — involved her intensely at the moment it was happening; then, when it was over, Control repossessed her, like some alter ego.

Usually a woman had to be wooed with candlelight dinner, soft music, romantic surroundings, but not Nadine. On the contrary, her approach had taken him by surprise.

Soon after his recruitment to Control's Berlin network, he had been assigned to the decoding office. He had worked with Nadine for several days before she even volunteered her name.

"It's Nadine," she had said, not raising her eyes from her work, "but don't call me anything but Miss Kurtz here."

"Does that mean," he'd said, "I can call you Nadine . . . elsewhere?"

"It might."

"And where is 'elsewhere'?"

"I'll let you know."

That had been the entire conversation. She had expressed no further interest in him for a week. At the time, he was sweating over a new code the Russians were using. He had tried so many combinations he was seeing double. Suddenly, he was aware of warm breath on his neck, and a tantalizing perfume that reminded him vaguely of jasmine.

"First rule of deciphering," she said: "Don't let it break *you* before you break *it*."

He had found himself looking up into her eyes, experiencing the first of those soon to be familiar exciting sensations at the back of the throat; no other woman had had that effect on him in a long time.

"You asked about 'elsewhere', " she said. "My place. Home cooking."

She directed him to a suburb in an unfashionable district and told him to park outside a small apartment complex. Control owned the apartments, she explained, and she had done well to get one, as there was a waiting list. He might well be allocated one himself, eventually.

He thought at first that she was kidding, but she was absolutely serious. Her total commitment to Control was both admirable and a little sad. He hoped he might redress the balance.

Dinner was a simple affair of chicken salad, white wine, fruit and cream. Even before they had

finished the meal, he was hooked. He helped clean up . . . then they sat in front of the imitation-logs gas fire, talking about their childhoods, previous jobs, previous relationships. Only when he touched on her reasons for joining Control did she show annoyance.

"What are *yours*?" she had countered. "A Reds under the bed complex, McCarthy style? Or something more idealistic?"

Then, as if in apology, she had smiled disarmingly and kissed him. They were lovers soon after.

"Hey, Steve, you awake?" Mark Girland's voice jolted Steve's thoughts back to the present; he had almost forgotten where they were going, what he had to do. "You haven't said a word since we left the hotel. You feel okay?"

"I'm not getting cold feet if that's what you mean." Steve tried to relax. Why let himself get riled by this man? Who was he anyway? A Control snoop. Well, he had taken care of snoopers before. He'd take care of this one, too, if need be.

"Something's bothering you, Mr. Dunning," Nadine said.

Steve reacted to her formal address, then remembered what they had agreed. "You must be psychic, Miss Kurtz," he said, with a touch of irony. "What bothers me is . . . if the KGB are on to us, aren't we sticking our necks out — going after Keitel, I mean? We'll be the sitting ducks."

"You're missing the point," Mark

Girland said. "The Ruskies don't know Miss Kurtz has broken their code, so the element of surprise is still with us."

Steve fell quiet. Nadine seemed to be a stranger . . . just as if she had never shared his bed. A vague unease made him reach for a cigarette. As though sensing his disquiet, her thigh pressed against his; it was her way of saying "Don't worry."

"The coded message," Nadine said, "told us the change of rendezvous. Keitel is in a no longer used church, near a square which is deserted at night. The armored van will pick him up there. Tonight."

"And across the square from the church is a flat-topped warehouse," Mark Girland added. "That's where we'll be waiting."

Steve wet his lips. Why hadn't he been told all this earlier? He had the uncomfortable feeling that he was an outsider, that Girland and Nadine shared a secret from which he was excluded. They can afford to be calm, he thought. It's not their finger on the trigger. I'm the guy who has to do the killing.

For the rest of the journey, nobody spoke. Nadine turned into an alley at the rear of the warehouse and switched off the engine. The Porsche coasted to a halt. As they got out, their breath formed ghostly shapes on the night air. Steve slung the rifle-case over his shoulder.

A small steel door had been left

unlocked. Steve shivered as he stepped inside. "What is this place — a gigantic refrigerator? A guy could freeze to death in here." He realized he was talking too much, a sure sign his nerves were on edge.

Mark Girland began to climb a flight of stairs.

Steve reached for Nadine's hand. She made as if to pull away, then squeezed his hand. The gesture raised his spirits.

***T**he time has arrived . . . the moment of truth . . . and you know what you must do. But can you do it? Suddenly you're not sure anymore. Suddenly you want answers to questions that have no answers. And what about reasons? You're doing it because Control says you must . . . but is that a reason, a real reason? Enough of a reason?*

The stairs led to a skylight. Once on the roof, Steve buttoned his coat; he couldn't risk letting the cold impair his aim.

A concrete parapet, about two feet high, surrounded the rooftop. At intervals were holes for drainage pipes.

Steve knelt beside one and slid the rifle barrel through. With the telescopic viewfinder, he could see every detail of the church opposite. The first shot would have to be fatal: there would be no opportunity for a second. Keitel's body would be exposed for three, four, maybe five

seconds. Not much time. But enough. He released the safety catch. He was relaxed, confident.

Only the distant rumble of the city's night traffic broke the silence. Nobody spoke.

Mark Girland fingered the .38 revolver in his pocket. Somehow he couldn't bring himself to trust Steve Dunning. A man who allowed himself to get emotionally involved, as Steve had, was vulnerable, was not to be relied upon. Steve was the weak link. Just *how* weak remained to be seen.

"There's the van." Nadine's voice cut the silence like a striking match.

Steve snaked his forefinger round the trigger, checked his breathing, focused the rifle's sight.

The church door opened. Three men emerged. One was short and stocky. Keitel. The man the West could not permit to tell what he knew. The man Steve had been assigned to kill.

Steve held his breath as the rifle-sight bisected Keitel's chest, then squeezed the trigger. He saw Keitel drop to the ground.

Then the rooftop exploded with gunshots from behind.

Mark Girland pitched forward; the back of his head had been blasted away.

Steve threw himself sideways, instinctively swinging the rifle into firing position. Nadine was standing eight feet away, gun in hand. From that range she couldn't miss. She

didn't. The impact of the bullet lifted Steve six inches off the ground.

Now you're an assassin . . . now you know what it's like to kill someone in cold blood, what Control calls a "political expediency." Easy for them. They aren't involved. How could they even begin to imagine what it's like to shoot the only man you've ever wanted . . .

Numbness evaporated from his anesthetized brain and faces swam before his eyes like reflections in a pool. The voice came as though from the far end of a long dark tunnel.

"You're going to pull through, Steve. A rib deflected the bullet." Through the fog, Steve recognized the chief of Control. "Keitel can't harm the West; he's dead, thanks to you. Mark Girland, too, I'm sorry to say."

Steve heard himself ask after Nadine.

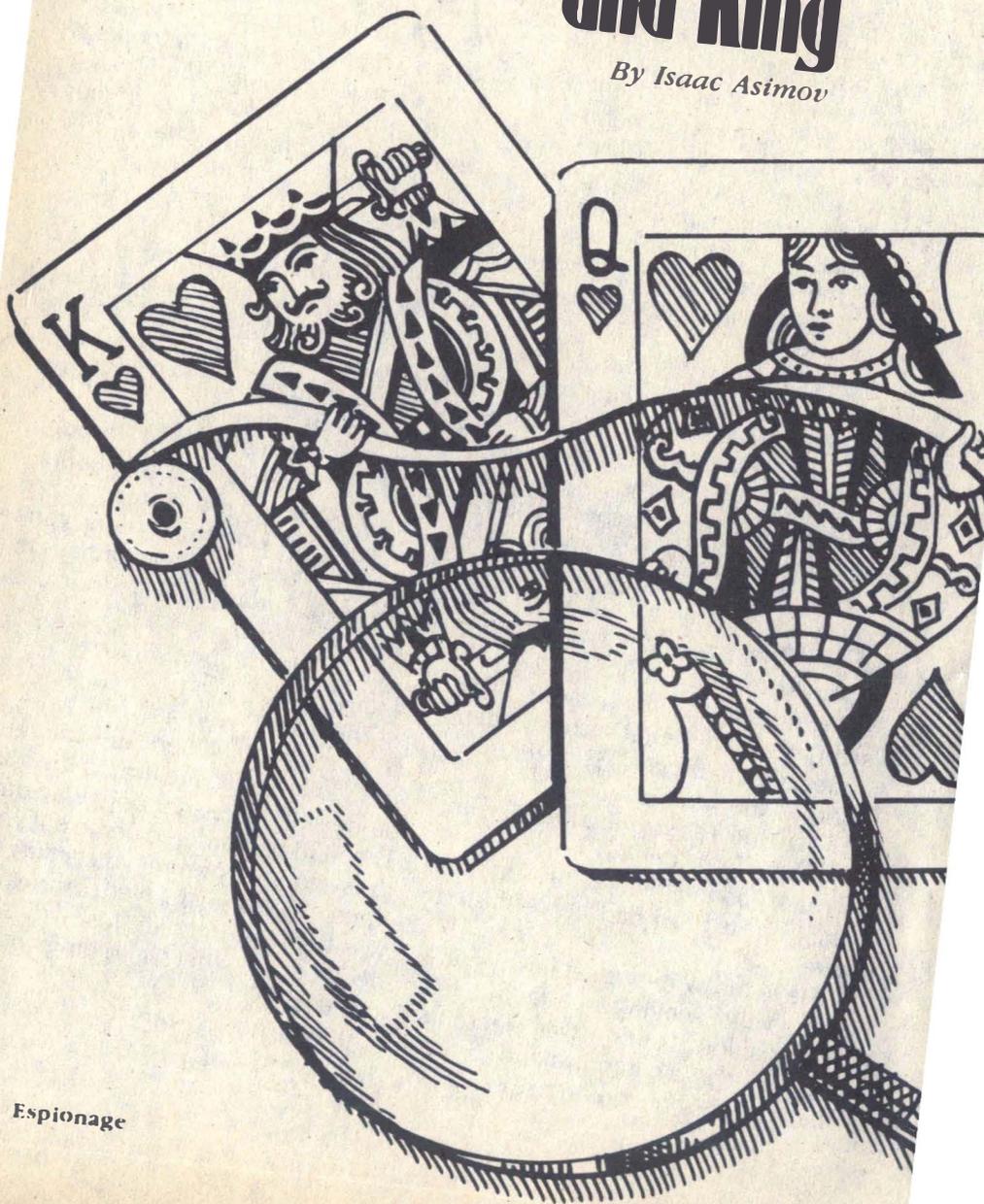
"The Kurtz woman? She was a double agent. When she thought she'd killed you, she turned the gun on herself. It was her only way out. The KGB had ordered her to kill you days ago — to prevent you getting to Keitel. But she delayed. And that was her fatal mistake. Just *why* she delayed is still something of a mystery."

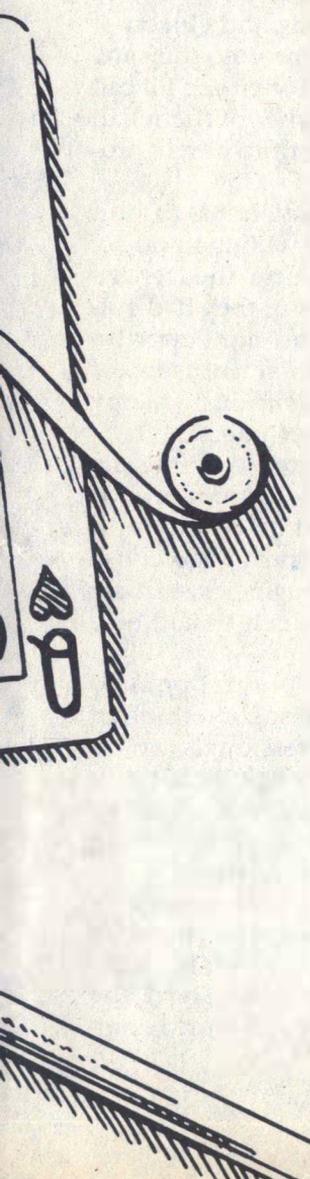
It was no mystery to Steve. He knew why . . . →

The Queen

and King

By Isaac Asimov





Jennings was making the august library of the Union Club a hideous sounding-board for a detailed and incredibly boring description of a bridge game he had played the evening before. I knew him to be a pathetic slave of the game, but till now he had had the good taste to avoid inflicting his madness on the rest of us.

Not that Griswold minded. As long as he had his whiskey and soda in his vise-like grip, and could sleep, snoring softly in his winged armchair, he was content. Baranof had the gift of seeming to listen without actually involving his ear-drums. That left me as the sole sufferer.

"Actually," I said, at last, "I think bridge is a game that is of interest only to mental defectives."

Jennings grinned and said, "Then how is it you don't play it?" (That was just the sort of stupid remark I would expect of him. He knew what I meant.)

"As a matter of fact," he went on, "bridge calls for the exercise of memory, for the keen analysis of probabilities, and for a careful study of human psychology. Less cruel and bloody than poker, it is less rarefied and anemic than chess."

"Shouldn't you have arranged for the sound of soft violins as accompaniment?" I asked.

Baranof said, "If you two start shouting, Griswold will come to and claim he once solved a case as a result of his knowledge of bridge."

Griswold's eyes shot open as though there were strings attached and someone had pulled them. "It so happens," he said, and paused to sip delicately at his drink, "that I did."

Baranof groaned theatrically. "I knew it."

Griswold said, "It wasn't *exactly* bridge."

"But you'll tell us anyway, won't you," I said.

You suppose correctly [said Griswold]. This happened at a time when relations with a certain other power were at a low point. And

you needn't shout out your guesses at the identity of the power, for that is a matter of no consequence to my tale. Besides, I am sworn to confidentiality, so I'll simply refer to the other power as Eastland.

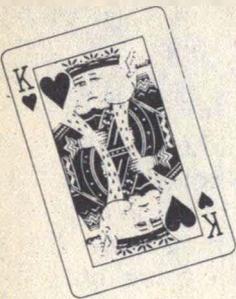
There was little we and they could agree on but among the little was the adulation of a certain pair of movie stars, who were married to each other and who were widely known as the King and Queen of the films. And don't bother telling me who they are, for their identity is of no consequence either. I'll call them Oscar and Emmy because neither of them had won either. Their fame did not arise from purely professional expertise.

They had been invited by the Eastlanders to visit some of their cities, and they were willing to do so. Emmy, in fact, was eager. But, of course, the Department insisted on being involved. Once they had gotten rid of me, you see, they had no one left who could be relied on to insist on some measure of sanity in their acts, and they were deliriously happy as a result — and usually insane, of course.

What they wanted was to have the two film stars deliver a strip of microfilm to a certain minor Eastlander official, one who could be relied on, it was felt, to get it to certain dissidents in the country. It would (the Department thought) exacerbate the internal stresses in Eastland, which would be a Good Thing.

Once the matter came to my attention, I pointed out quietly that it was mad to entrust something of this sort to an amateur when professionals would have found the matter difficult enough. Second, it was foolish to endanger hoped-for cultural exchange programs. Third, it was wrong to risk having American idols taken into custody as spies.

The answer was that it was just a matter of mischief-making and did not involve American security, so the risk was not great. Second, Eastland did the same with people they sent here. Third, the feeling was that Eastland would not risk world com-



motion by making trouble for people who were idols of the world and not merely of the United States.

I won't say there wasn't something to the Department's self-justifications, but they were wrong, anyway. For one thing, the precious pair entrusted with the task were not only amateurs, they were film stars, which meant melodramatic amateurs. They went to a great deal of trouble to work out a particularly ridiculous scheme for transferring the information. It was Emmy's idea, actually. Of the two, she was the more hare-brained.

It was her notion to have a quantity of cookies made, with the microfilm buried in one of them. Naturally, the guilty cookie would be obscurely, but unmistakably, marked for sure identification. The person for whom the microfilm was intended would be at a party hosted by our pair of America's sweethearts, and, amid lavish and distracting ceremonies, the correct cookie would be passed over.

The number of ways in which this could go wrong was enormous and, of course, it *did* go wrong.

Emmy had a number of cookies wrapped, supervising the process with her very own sharp eyes and shrill voice, and carefully saw to it that the correct cookie (known to her alone) was wrapped in a different color. She placed it on the plate with other cookies in such a way that it was totally unobtrusive, but *she* knew where it was. She kept the plate out of casual reach of anyone else.

When the person she was waiting for arrived, and had identified himself with the appropriate inane remark, she whipped out the plate of cookies, and said, "I hope you like cookies, sir?"

"If you have made them yourself, madam," he said gallantly, in heavily-accented English, "I would prefer them to ambrosia." Sickening, but that was what he was supposed to say and it made it clear that he understood the significance of *the* cookie.

"I made these myself, indeed," said Emmy bright-





ly. "Please help yourself."

He took several and, while he did so, she was supposed to seize upon *the* cookie and give it to him very casually. Its distinctive wrapping would keep him from mistaking it later, after he had put it, along with two or three innocent cookies, into his pocket.

I say that Emmy was *supposed* to seize upon *the* cookie, but she never did. *The* cookie simply wasn't there.

She scabbled through the cookies on the plate with increasing agitation, looked on and under the table, began to pass from agitation to frenzy, and noticed that she was attracting amazed attention. She was trouper enough to give the waiting (and stunned) official something else, along with silvery laughter, and to maintain a brave front for the rest of the evening.

The cookie, however, was irretrievably gone and, when the evening was over, she had a raging headache (genuine) and then developed a serious attack of the flu (not so genuine) which forced her, and Oscar too, of course, to cut short their tour and return home. Eastland officials, whose politeness had now become freezingly formal, waved good-bye vigorously.

When our sweethearts of the screen returned, they reported angrily and defensively to the Department, which cleared its collective throat and felt foolish.

Emmy was naturally questioned rather closely, and it quickly became clear that the plate had *not* been under continuous surveillance. Anyone could have meddled with it. The hotel staff was in and out, cooks, waiters, and so on. Nor might it have been a matter of actual suspicion of wrong-doing. The microfilm had been put into something edible, after all, and the cookie might merely have been eaten and the microfilm casually swallowed, or possibly, spat out.

The Department, therefore, dismissed it as a



regrettable accident.

But then, it appeared that several Eastland dissidents were questioned rather vigorously, and the minor official who was to receive the microfilm received a quick (and secret) trial and was sent to prison. Clearly, the cookie had not been casually eaten, but had been intercepted by the Eastlanders and the microfilm had been retrieved.

How was that possible? How had Eastland intelligence known about the cookie?

And then something else happened. We had an agent in Eastland who had infiltrated their intelligence apparatus and he managed to get us a message. It wasn't much of a message — one symbol and two letters. Nothing more. (Poor fellow. He died in harness not long after.) The message was:

“♥Q, K”

Old Harrison came to me with it at last. As they all did, he looked worried when he came in, looking this way and that. No one from the Department was supposed to come and consult me. I was off-limits. They all did, of course, once they were sufficiently desperate.

I said, “You weren't followed?”

He said, “Come, Griswold, I know you weren't treated well, but *I* had nothing to do with it.”

“So now you want my help and if anything comes of it, you get all the credit.”

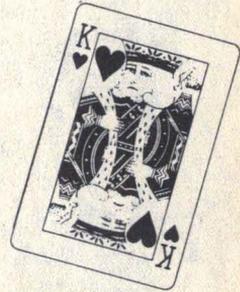
“Shall we put it this way, Griswold? Your country wants your help?”

I snorted politely. “Well, tell me what it's all about?”

He did. He told me the story and showed me the message. “But what does the message mean?” he asked plaintively.

I said, “I presume that what it says is ‘The Queen and King of Hearts.’ That's what it would mean in a bridge column.”

“Yes, yes, of course. We saw that at once. But what does *that* mean?”





"Since you told me the story of the movie couple and that stupid cookie of theirs, I suppose you think it must refer to them."

"We're sure of it. That's what Oscar and Emmy are always called in the film magazines. But what is the message referring to them *about*?" asked Harrison.

"I suppose that the logical first guess is that our agent might be trying to tell you that your precious pair tipped off the Eastlanders for some reason and that the whole business of the lost cookie is a charade designed to hide their treason."

"We can't believe that. Why on earth should they be willing to betray their country? They certainly weren't tortured into it, and they couldn't be bribed into it. They've got all the money and fame and adulation anyone could want."

"What about ideological conviction?"

Harrison looked astonished. "Come, Griswold, you can't be serious. Neither one could raise an ideological drop of sweat on Washington's hottest day. They're a pair of emptyheads."

"Are you sure? It's not so difficult to play dumb."

He shook his head, "Please. We've had occasion to investigate them before. We have plenty of evidence of their acting ability, and they just don't have it in them to play *that* dumb that well."

"What else can we find in that message? Our man is damned capable, and he wouldn't send this if it didn't mean something and if he didn't think we could understand it."

"Maybe you didn't get the whole message? Maybe this is a fragment and is incomprehensible for that reason."

"It's the whole message. We're sure."

So I looked at it again — ♥Q,K.

"Is that the way it came in? Exactly?"

"Yes, of course. Why?"

"Because the Q and K are in the wrong order. It should be K, Q. Cards are always listed in order of



decreasing value: Ace, King, Queen, Jack, ten, and so on down to two.”

“Emmy’s the dominant one of the pair. Naturally, he’d refer to her first.”

“Even though they’re always referred to by their fans as ‘the King and Queen of Hearts,’ and *not* as the Queen and King of Hearts?”

“Even so.”

I shook my head, stared at the message and said, “I presume that the sweethearts didn’t travel alone, but had an entourage.”

“Of course.”

“And among them there must be a particularly trusted underling who’s always with them; managing and running things for them.”

“Yes, there’s a man named Francis Biddeford who has been with the two of them since they got married. He serves as their agent and their general factotum.”

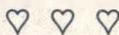
“Good! Take my advice and turn him inside out. He’d know everything they were doing, and would have every opportunity to take the cookie and deliver it, out of ideological conviction, perhaps. This message says he’s a traitor.”

Harrison stared at it unbelievably. “Where?”

I explained, and he said, “I can’t believe it.”

But, out of desperation, he advanced the suggestion to the Department. Biddeford was faced with a relentless investigation and, under questioning, he broke down. As I had suspected, Harrison got the credit. And there you have it.

“Have what?” said Jennings, violently. “The message doesn’t say anything but the King and Queen of Hearts.”



Just for fun, why not try to interpret this message yourself. Then, turn to page 160 and compare your interpretation with Griswold’s.



The PRESIDENT'S BRAIN IS MISSING

by Ron Goulart

The dying man sat up and yanked out a killgun. Jake Pace had been anticipating that and, after gently but swiftly shoving his lovely auburnhaired wife over onto the plaz cobblestones of the hospital courtyard, he drew his stungun and fired.

Zzzzzummmmm!

The figure on the stretcher stiffened, produced a series of internal clangings, dropped his deadly weapon and fell sideways over onto the stones.



The two ambulance attendants, who'd been trying to deliver the alleged accident victim to the exclusive Park Avenue Surgical Centre, both exclaimed, "The jig's up!" Abandoning their stretcher, they scooted for the cab of their eggshell-white skyvan.

Jake was about to go sprinting after them when his wife, on her feet again, grabbed him and dragged him to shelter behind a high decorative plaz hedge.

"Hildy, why the devil are you impeding my pursuit of those louts who..."

"The guy on the stretcher's an android, set to..."

Kaboom!

"Explode," finished Jake, as fragments of their would-be assassin went climbing up into the Manhattan twilight.

The fake ambulance was also in the air, heading away from them.

The debris from the mechanical man came raining down on the brixwalled surgical center courtyard. A plaz eye, bright blue, bonked Jake on the shoulder, a few blond curls fluttered down on Hildy.

"This must be an important case we're about to embark on," she observed.

"People don't hire Odd Jobs, Inc. for trivial cases," reminded her husband. He was a long lean man in his middle thirties, tanned and a bit weatherbeaten. In just three months from now, in June of 2005, their private detective agency would be ten years old. Their marriage was a year older. "We specialize, afterall, in the sort of investigations that few others, even crackajack government agencies, can handle."

Hildy smiled. "I don't recall saying, 'And now a word from our sponsor.'"

"Not vanity to state the obv..."

"Do you people intend, I mean really now, to frolic in our shrubbery for the remainder of the evening?" The coppercolored robot, who'd been examining their ID packets when the dubious skyambulance had come wailing down for a landing, was still standing on the steps of the glaz and sudometal hospital, metal hands on metal hips. "Afterall, you know, this is a hospital not a..."

"As I was mentioning," said Jake, escorting his lovely wife up to the threshold, "we have an appointment with the US Troubleshooter General, who teleported here from Washington, DC to..."

“And what about the residue of that dreadful man who was pretending to be a potential patient?” inquired the hospital robot. “If you think I intend to sweep up that awful mess you’ve got...”

“We’re now ten minutes late for our meeting,” said Hildy, sweetly. “What say we discuss this matter *after* we...”

“Oh, surely, yes. I imagine you’d like that, wouldn’t you? Leave me with a blownup assassin on my...Awk! Ooops!”

Jake had reached out to poke a spot in the mechanism’s left armpit. That, though few knew it, was all it took to shut off this particular model. “Let’s go in,” he suggested to Hildy.

“You’re even more impatient than usual tonight.”

“Getting attacked by assassins tends to remind me of my mortality,” he explained, urging her inside.

Less than forty-five minutes later, Jake was flying westward, alone, in one of their sleek Odd Jobs, Inc. skycars. He had a small makeup kit resting on his lap and was adding a beard to his chin.

The pixphone screen on the control dash buzzed and his auburn-haired wife’s image appeared. “Jake, I...what’s wrong with your face?”

“Not a damn thing. I’m simply applying a disguise so I can crash the Political Assassins Guild Annual Awards Banquet out in Greater Los Angeles tonight with ease and...”

“And that’s supposed to be a beard?”

Jake affixed another lock of ginger whiskers. “Was that the purpose of your call? To heckle?”

“Nope, I wanted you to know I’ve located Eroica Tone,” answered Hildy with what might or might not have been contriteness. “She’s down in Florida, which is where I’m heading.”

“Okay. Be careful and check with me later tonight.”

“You be careful, too, Jake. With that godawful beard you’re going to need a lot of...well, never mind. Bye. I love you.”

“Same here.” After the small oval screen went dead, he picked up a mirror to examine his face. “Hell, that’s one of the most believable beavers I’ve ever encountered.”

Jake flipped a toggle on the dash, deciding to play again highlights from his vidtape of their recent interview back in Manhattan with United States Troubleshooter General Russell Toilet.

“...ahead and laugh,” the stocky pinkish man was saying.

“Russ,” Hildy told him, “we’ve known you for several years, ever since you were with the Federal Obfuscation Office. We no longer feel moved to mirth over your name. Never did, for that matter.”

Well, when one has a funny name...a dirty name...one expects continual... ”

“Let’s,” suggested Jake, “talk about our fee.”

“And the nicknames I’ve had hurled at me over the years: Doodoo, Potty, Crapper...”

“The fee?”

“We can’t do better than \$250,000. We lost quite a bit on those hayfever missiles aimed at...”

“\$500,000,” countered Jake.

“C’mon, Jake, that’s an outrageous price for just...”

“How many government agents have you lost already on this particular problem, Russ?”

“Well...a few.”

Hildy said, “Twenty-six is an odd definition of a few.”

“It’s only twenty-five. FBI Agent Truett turns out to have died of natural causes.”

“How can somebody fall off the torch of the Statue of Liberty and die of natural causes?”

“He had vertigo, which the FBI should’ve...”

“\$500,000,” mentioned Jake, again. “In front.”

“You know, I’ve still got top agents like Rowland Pond working on this. Could be he’ll crack it and we won’t need you folks at...”

“The United States government,” reminded Hildy, “never calls in a private inquiry agency like ours unless they’re desperate, Russ.”

“Okay, how about half now and the rest in tax rebates over the next five...”

“All. Now.”

“I don’t think you’re being at all patriotic, Jake.”

Hildy said, “For a job like this we’d charge a *foreign* government at least \$750,000. And don’t forget that we’ve already had an attempt made on our lives.”

“By the way, shouldn’t you save the scraps of that andy and go over them for clues to...”

“Nope,” said Jake, “it’s a standard Taiwan-2 android.”

"How do you know that?"

"Watched the pieces come tumbling down. Do we get our fee?"

Toilet got pinker. "All right, but..."

Jake, slouched slightly in the driveseat of the skycar, fastforwarded his tape to the spot where TG Toilet was giving the details of the case.

"...as you may have heard, even though Obfuscation tried mightily to suppress all mention, President Singleton's been suffering from a rare neurological disease known as Ellison's Syndrome. The victims of this dread malady have their brains go completely and permanently blank within a matter of months. Fortunately, Dr. Tinkerman here at the famed Park Avenue Surgical Centre has just recently perfected a procedure whereby the entire contents of a human brain can be transferred electronically, and quite painlessly, to a silicon chip no bigger than, to use the good doctor's quaint expression, a gnat's pecker. The process is costly, of course. The surgeons' and electricians' bills for the president's recent operation run to \$756,000,000, and that doesn't include his daily room rate, or the..."

"For one nitwit operation, you guys lay out \$756,000,000," cut in Jake, "and then you bitch about giving us a paltry \$500,000."

"Jake, let Russ continue."

"Sometimes I wonder, Hildy, how you came to tie up with a man who's so mercenary."

"He's awfully cute, Russ. Continue."

"Very well. Dr. Tinkerman and his able crew of humans, androids and robots performed the complex operation successfully two days ago. Unfortunately, however, once the information is transferred the original human brain is left completely blank," continued Toilet. "Therefore, all of President Singleton's knowledge, all the important governmental secrets he was privy to, are now contained only in that chip. After a few days had passed and he was judged fully recovered from the original operation, then the chip was to have been planted in his skull. However..."

"Somebody swiped the brain chip," said Jake.

"Exactly," admitted the Troubleshooter General, forlornly. "The chip was taken from this very room in which we stand. The alarm system was deftly made inoperative, the formidable duo of robot guards rendered defunct and the storage cabinet opened with ease.

"It's most important we find the brain before this Thursday."

"Why Thursday?" asked Hildy.

"Well, I can't say. Just trust me that..."

"Panazuella," said Jake.

Toilet jumped back. "How'd you know about..."

"Odd Jobs, Inc. is in the business of knowing things," he replied, grinning. "Two weeks ago, the Office of Clandestine Activities, working on secret orders from President Singleton himself, planted six thousand-some canisters in the major cities of that troubled Central American country. Those canisters are tied in with a computer located in Arlington, Virginia, and unless somebody gives it a countermanding order by noon Thursday, every darned one of them will explode."

Hildy snapped her shapely fingers. "And Singleton's the only one who knows the password that'll shut off the canisters."

Toilet sighed. "It took six long weeks to plant the gas and there's simply no way we can retrieve them in two days," he admitted. "We have to find the president's brain because..."

"Because Congress got wind of this and they're starting to make an enormous fuss. If the Lugubrium Gas is actually used down there you'll all be in considerable trouble," said Jake, his grin widening.

"They're very touchy about this sort of thing on the Hill," said the TG. "And it's not as if the Lugubrium is fatal. The stuff is actually quite humane. What the president and the OCA had in mind was to make those rebels who control Panazuella suddenly lugubrious...sad, depressed, tearful, given to uncontrolled kvetching. While they were thus occupied, a crack army of more moderate exiles would be landed in the key cities to take over."

"But now that Congress is catching on," said Hildy, "you don't dare pull that. Shame on you anyway, Russ."

"This whole mess wasn't my idea, Hildy. I only..."

"You mentioned when you pixed us up at our place in Connecticut," cut in Jake, "that your various investigators found only two clues and couldn't make anything out of either."

Nodding, Toilet pointed to the plaz flooring in front of the wall panel that concealed the cabinet where President Singleton's new brain had been reposing. "That odd little scratch on the floor is one," he said, "and this single thread the other." He produced a plyolope containing a thin, inch long twist of purplish neowool. Jake knelt, rubbing his fingertips over the tiny scratch.



"Somebody was tapdancing here," he concluded.

"Tapdancing? Really, Jake, I'm not in the mood for..."

"Bojangles Jazzinsky," said Hildy.

Jake stood. "Yep. That's one of his quirks. When he's elated he does a small dance," he said. "And swiping the president's brain is the sort of accomplishment that'd make him jolly."

"Why didn't the FBI, the CIA, the OCA or the Manhattan Murder-Theft Squad know that?"

Shrugging one shoulder, Jake answered, "For one thing, they don't have the resources Odd Jobs, Inc. does."

Hildy took the little plaz envelope from the Troubleshooter General. "Might Bojangles' client be Eroica Tone, Jake?"

"The lady who heads the Wargas Advisory Board and is dedicated to championing the wider use of chemical and biological weapons?"

"That Eroica Tone, yes." Hildy lifted the purple thread from the envelope. "She likes to wear off-the-rack-warmup suits."

"Yeah, usually purplish ones," said Jake thoughtfully. "Sure, and Bojangles goes for neolon jackets with silver studs all over them. When she hired him, a thread from her suit must have been caught on a stud. Later it dropped off here."

"She's the sort of woman who's always hugging people," added Hildy.

"Okay," said Jake. "Bojangles, who's one of the best assassins and catburglars in the country, is up for an award at the Political Assassins Guild bash out in Greater Los Angeles tonight. I'll go out there and chat with him."

Hildy said, "And I'll find Eroica Tone."

Toilet looked from Jake to his wife. "This sounds very impressive. You're not just conning me are you?"

Jake gave him a bleak grin. "My only real flaw, Russell, is a tendency to be completely honest with our clients. I never lie to them," he said. "Now get us a certified check for the \$500,000 so we can get started on this mess."

The lobby of the New Allah Hotel was vast, made entirely of seethru glaz. The hotel sat out on pilings over the Pacific Ocean in the Malibu Sector of GLA. Jake, decked out in believable whiskers and a three-piece tuxsuit, came striding from the groundlevel skycar lot at a few minutes past eight Pacific Con-

servative Time. There were several conventions and banquets going on at the luxury hotel tonight and besides assassins, Jake found himself rubbing shoulders with members of the Space Colony Realtors of America, the Transexual Mothers of the West, the Quack Doctors Association and the Senior Citizens Motorcycle Gangs of the USA.

It was while dodging two ninety year old cycle hoods in leather studsuits that Jake brushed against a slender blonde young woman who was sobbing into a ptyochief. "Something?" he inquired.

The girl, who wore a two-piece pinstripe clingsuit, was quite pretty. "Oh, no...nobody can help me," she said sniffing mournfully. "Unless that person was a pianist."

Jake grinned. "I happen to play a little piano," he told the unhappy blonde. Actually he was, although his wife now and then suggested he was a shade too vain about it, an excellent piano player. Classical, pop, jazz, cocktail.

The girl made an inhaling, burbling sound. "Oh! That's marvelous." Then she slumped further. "But...heck, I don't just need a piano player, I need a progressive jazz piano player, one who's expert at recreating the style of the middle of the last century." After carefully wadding up the hankie she'd been crying into, she nodded across the wide crowded lobby. "See that cocktail lounge yonder, sir."

"Club Bebop. That one?"

"Yes. I'm the manager of the place and the bebopper I hired ran off to Yucatan with his wife's best friend only moments ago and if I don't find a substitute at once I'll be up the creek and out on my ear." Suddenly, putting her head against Jake's chest she resumed her sad sobbing.

"Hey, no need for that," Jake said. "I can take the time to do at least one set for you, miss." The presentation of the prestigious Brutus Award of Assassin of the Year wouldn't take place for at least an hour or more. Since Bojangles Jazzinsky was one of the nominees, he'd be certain to stick around up in the Nixon Ballroom at least until then.

"Can you actually play that style of music?"

"Sure, I'll do my bop medley. Bud Powell, Thelonius Monk and Red Garland. Maybe throw in a little Horace Silver.

"Perfect." She lifted her tearstained face from his chest and gave him a moist grateful kiss on the cheek. "That's the very sort of

oldfashioned junk our dippy patrons dote on." Taking hold of his arm, she began escorting him across the lobby. "By the way, what's your name?"

"I'm Strangler Wisebacker."

"An assassin, are you?"

"Quack doctor."

"Oh, I thought because of the name."

"It's my real first name. My late father had a rather eccentric sense of humor."

"My name is Susie Miller. I've always thought it sort of bland, but I guess it's a heck of a lot better than Strangler Wisebacker." She tugged him across the threshold of the cocktail lounge, nodding at the doorman, a chunky fellow in beret, darkglasses and zootsuit. "I found someone, Diz."

"That's a gas."

Of the twenty or so patrons in the dimly lit oval room, over half were ancient members of motorcycle gangs. They hooted and made shaky attempts at obscene gestures as Jake mounted the piano stool.

The upright piano rested on a rectangle of seethru glaz and the Pacific was visible underfoot. Jake adjusted the stool, flexed his fingers, collected his thoughts and commenced playing.

He was only a few notes into *Un Poco Loco* when a sweetsmelling pinkish gas began to whisper up from the keyboard at him. As it engulfed him, Jake muttered, "Duped again. What'll Hildy say when..." His face played a harsh chord when he fell into the piano.

"Let me through, I can help," cried a man in the audience. "I'm a quack."

The lanky blond young man in the two-piece clownsuit blushed when Hildy emerged, long bare legs foremost, from the glistening just-landed skycar. "Darn," he murmured, smoothing his polka dot pants.

Hildy, who wore a shortskirted spunglas suitdress and had silky platinum hair now, inhaled the warm Florida night air. "You must be Mr. Ives," she said smiling.

Distant calliope music drifted across the darkness beyond the landing area.

"Ulp," said Preston Ives, Jr.

"Whatever is bothering you?" Reaching out, she patted his perspiring cheek.

"Well, Mrs. Silverhill...I'm...gee...sort of embarrassed. We salesmen here at the Circus Factory have to wear these clownsuits...but...well, with somebody like you...I feel sort of silly."

"You look absolutely terrific," Hildy assured him. "And call me Bunch."

"Bunch?"

"Short for Honeybunch. That's my dear husband's nickname for me. He's Arnold Silverhill, who owns the baseball teams in America."

"I've heard of him," responded Ives. "So have my bosses, which is why they opened up the salesrooms at this ungodly hour, ma'am. Ordinarily, we only sell our robot clowns, lions, elephants, trapeze artists and so on, by day."

"I really appreciate the gesture." She patted his cheek again.

"Um...did I get the message right?" asked Ives. "You want to buy a whole circus?"

"Yes, but it isn't for *me*." She laughed. "It's for dear Arnold...He's a fanatic circus buff and I want to give him one for his birthday. He'll be forty next week. That's an important milestone in any man's life."

"So I hear. I'm only twenty-six at the moment."

"You look much more mature."

"Um...when you say a whole and entire circus, ma'am..."

"Call me Bunch."

"When you mention that you want to purchase a whole circus, Bunch...um...is that a three ring circus or a one ring?"

"Three of course, Pres. Is that what they call you...Pres?"

"Actually, people call me Poison. That's sort of because my last name is ivy."

"You'll be Pres to me." Hildy linked her arm with his. "Before you show me the mechanical elephants and all...how many elephants will I need, by the way?"

"Six?"

Hildy's pretty nose wrinkled as she thought. "That really doesn't sound like enough," she said. "But before we get down to business, Pres, I wonder if you could tell me where my dear old friend Eroica Tone is staying."



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"Over in Guest Pavillion #2, Mrs....um...Bunch." He pointed into the darkness at a faroff chain of floating blue spots of light. "She's a real circus enthusiast, too, and comes down here two or three times a year to watch our techs test the latest mechanical clowns and animals. You're friends, huh?"

"Frankly, my husband's interest in circuses started after he heard Eroica gushing about your Circus Factory."

"Well, we do make just about the best mechanical circus equipment in the world."

"Which is why I'm here." Smiling, she patted his cheek and then tweaked his nose.

"Gosh..." Ives straightened up, arms dropping to his side. His eyes came fluttering shut.

Hildy dropped the tiny knockout mist capsule she'd broken beneath his nostrils into her shoulder bag and caught the clownsuit salesman before he fell over.

After a careful glance around, she dragged him behind a stand of palmetto trees. Then she went walking briskly for the pavillion that housed her quarry.

"O h, that," said the middlesized, middleaged man in the two-piece white cabsuit. "I've got that right here." He lifted his wallet from his hip pocket, opened it and eased out his skydriver's license. "Notice the wart on the cheek in the ID photo? "That's actually the president's brain. Stuck it on with Elmer's Glue. That stuff really does a great job of..."

"Why," Jake interrupted to ask, "did you drag me down here to Panazuela, Pond?"

Rowland Pond blinked, scanned the sunfilled storeroom and said, "What makes you think you're in Panazuela, Jake?"

Jake, hands tied behind him, was sitting in a lame wicker chair next to a stack of neowood crates. "Listen," he suggested, nodding at an open window.

"Guitar music," recognized the renegade US government agent. "Layabouts singing in Spanish. Yes, those are good clues sure enough."

"Parrots, too, and cockatoos," added Jake, "jabbering in the palm trees I can see across the way."

"You're not such a bad detective at that."

"Besides which," said Jake, "all these cases of Holy Cola say 'Bottled in Panazuela under a license of the Holy Cola Company of Iola, Wisconsin.' "

"I've never stored a prisoner here before," Pond said. "I should've realized there were so many telltale signs."

"Why'd you take me prisoner and not just kill me?"

"Don't tell me you're complaining about my not bumping you off, Jake?"

"You and your gang have killed twenty-six investigators already."

"Twenty-five." Pond seated himself in a wing chair facing Jake. "You we decided to keep as a hostage, since, and I don't mean this merely as cheap flattery, you're a heck of a lot betterknown than any government agent, even me, and..."

"You in this with Eroica Tone?"

Pond nodded. "You hear about some agents who sell out for money and some who sell out for sex," he said, smiling contentedly. "I'm getting both. \$230,000 in cash and Eroica. Now, I know she's sort of slim and she's nearly forty and some people say she's about three degrees nastier than a pit viper and it's possible she'll throw me out on my toke when she tires of..."

"What exactly is the purpose of all this?" Jake had been, unobtrusively, testing the neorope that bound his wrists. He was certain he could, in time, work free. "You want the gas to go off, is that it?"

"Yes, right. It'll be a terrific demonstration of the effectiveness of wargas in general. It took Eroica months to cajole President Singleton and the OCA into trying this and we aren't going to let Congress futz it up now. The publicity value of devastating a radical country with something like Lugubrium is fantastic and..."

"What about the president's brain?"

Pond patted his wallet and slipped it back into his hip pocket. "Oh, once the gas canisters go off, we'll send it back," he said. "Either by United Parcel or Fed Express; wouldn't trust the Post Office. Eroica wanted to send it 4th Class Rate, but I feel that's snide and, after all, it is the president of the United States we're..."

"Excuse it, senior."

Pond, frowning, turned toward the uniformed man who'd opened the door and come quietly into the storeroom. "What's wrong now, Raoul?"

"Is the reporter?"

“What the hell would a reporter be doing here?”

The lieutenant of the Opposition Army consulted the business card held out in his left hand. “She is with the *Tiny Tots Magazine* of Chicago, Illinois,” he explained. Her name is Vera Dalyrimple and...”

“I’m here to do a piece on how Holy Cola is brewed and bottled.” Hildy pushed the lieutenant aside, gently, and came in. She had shortcut grey hair, wore a two-piece bizsuit and carried a large sudostraw purse over her left shoulder. “Our four and a half million readers are eager to know how their favorite soft drink is made. For instance, what function does that lanky gentleman tied to the lopsided chair serve in the whole process.”

“Oh, him,” said Pond. “He’s one of our employees who just went berserk. They do that a lot here in Panazuela. Running amok they call it. You just tie them up until the mood passes.”

“Fascinating.” She moved closer to her husband.

“Miss Dalyrimple, if you want the full Holy Cola story, you ought to visit our main plant in Iola, Wisconsin,” Pond told her. “Because that’s where...”

“I’d better tell you why I came *here* instead.” Smiling sweetly, Hildy reached into her purse. “This will explain everything.”

Zzzzzzummmmm!

Zzzzzzummmmm!

She fired the stungun she’d produced, twice.

The lieutenant stiffened and toppled over first, followed an instant later by Pond.

Putting the gun away, Hildy took a small knife from her purse. “Honestly, Jake,” she said, while slicing the ropes. “Letting them con you into playing the piano.”

“You got to Eroica Tone?”

“Sure. And after I used some truth mist on her, she informed me all about her plans and about you.

Jake stood up as soon as the final rope fell free. “Singleton’s brain is in Pond’s wallet,” he said, rubbing at his wrists.

Kneeling, Hildy abstracted the wallet from the hip pocket of the stunned agent. “Once this gets back into the president’s head, he’s just going to come up with more crackpot plans and mischief.”

“Even so,” said Jake, “we have to return it.” Taking the wallet from her, he slid it into his breast pocket. “Thanks for rescuing me.” +



THE PURIST

by Edward Wellen

Clyde Morlock — that was the name he used in England — found the Admiralty plans in Sir George Fliflet's desk drawer. These Englanders! So punctilious in small matters, so careless in momentous ones.

Morlock drew the plans from the accordion-pleated paper wallet he had found them in and spread them on the desk top. Yes, these were the specifications for the coaling stations Her Britannic Majesty's fleet would need if — say rather when; if not this decade, then the next — war came and the Kaiser's fleet blocked the Suez Canal. To make the voyage to India the long way around, ports to refuel and reprovision at and to put into for repairs and refitting, were vital. Alliances were always chancy, treaties always liable to breaching — especially in time of war, when needed most. Great Britain required bases under its total control, bases a potential foe would be unaware of, bases from which the British fleet could sally forth to strike unexpected blows and withdraw to for shelter and resupply. And these plans laid it all out. Which Pacific atolls and Indian Ocean isles were to be secretly made ready, which harbors blasted and dredged for the draughts of the British fleet's mightiest warships, what supplies built up where.

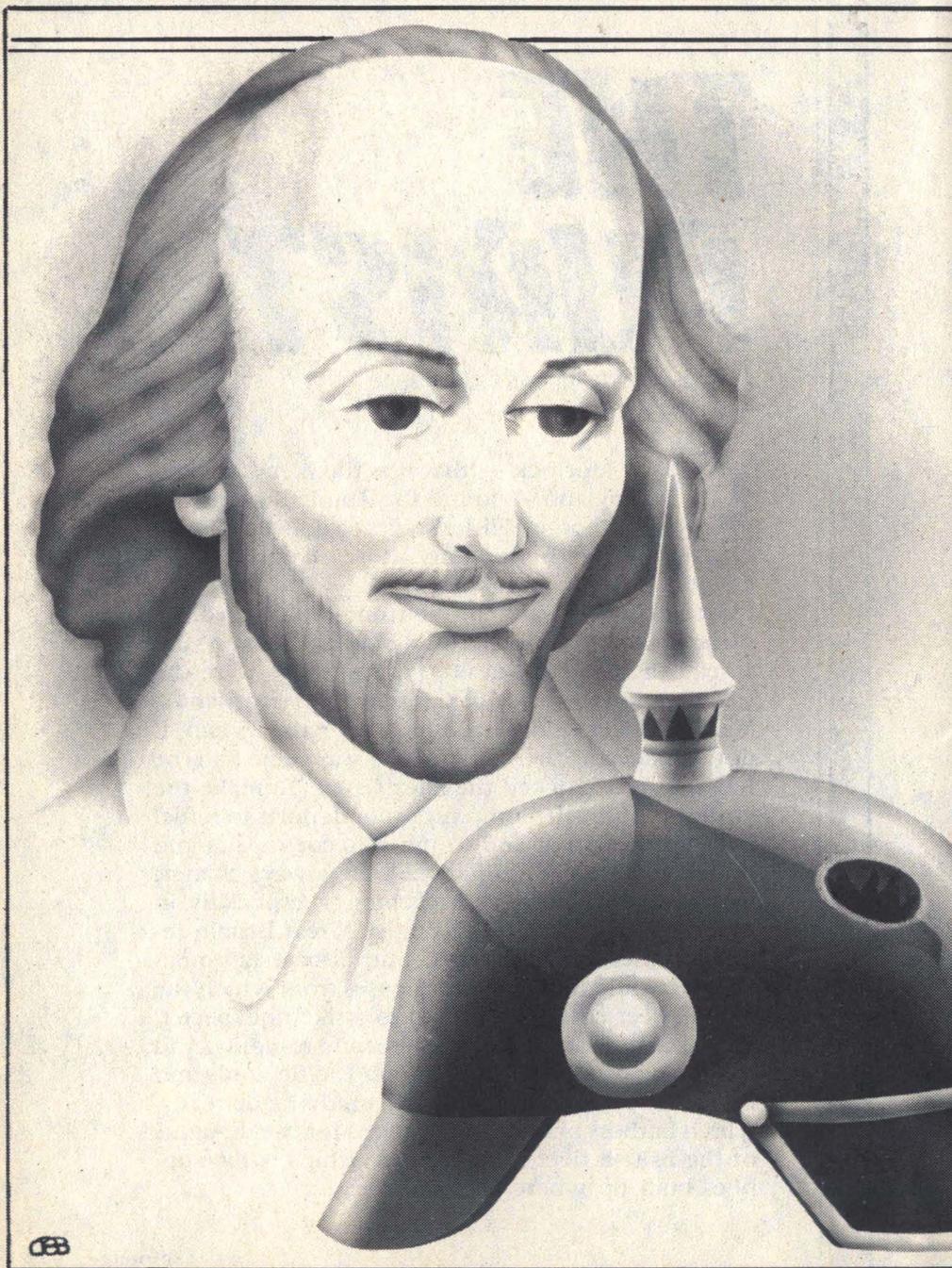
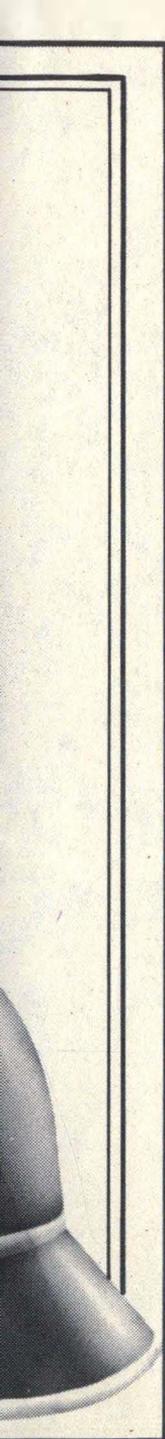


Illustration by Bruce Baker



With these plans in hand, the Kaiser's agents could sabotage the installations, snap the links in the chain of empire the late Disraeli had been forging for his sovereign.

Morlock's own sovereign had dreams of empire, of an empire to put the British *lion* in the shade. How grateful the Kaiser would be to the man who made that possible! Morlock almost stiffened to attention, visualizing the Kaiser himself pinning a coveted Iron Cross on his chest, a chest that swelled now in anticipatory pride.

But this was no time to stand gloating.

Shakespeare said it, as Shakespeare had said everything else:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,

Which, taken at the flood,

Leads on to fortune;

Omitted, all the voyage of their life

Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Capital advice.

Morlock found a supply of blank writing paper in the same drawer, helped himself to a dozen sheets, folded them in three, and stuffed them into the cardboard wallet to keep the theft from becoming immediately obvious. He replaced the wallet in the drawer, in the exact position he had found it, and carefully closed the drawer.

He took up the plans from the desktop and suddenly realized why Shakespeare had surfaced in his mind. Morlock's task was to get the plans to a fellow secret agent who, in turn, would spirit the plans out of England. This spy courier was presently staying at Stratford, Shakespeare's village.

Morlock would not even risk returning to his room. He would pocket the plans and slip out of the house straightaway. The Clyde Morlock identity could not stand up under sustained scrutiny by Scotland Yard detectives, to say nothing of Naval Intelligence wallahs. Clyde Morlock would have to vanish after this night's work. Sink without a trace.

Full fathom five, as Shakespeare said.

Resurface elsewhere, of course. Perhaps — and he grimaced — facing the world from behind mutton chops and a walrus mustache. In any event, he would assume another identity, travel in other circles, in another part of the country. Shakespeare had a telling phrase for that, too. *What's in a name?* That which is sub rosa is only furthered by the taking on of other names. Still, the man who went by the name of Clyde Morlock felt a sad smile tug at his mouth. He knew a pang at having to jettison Clyde Morlock. The part had fitted him snugly.

He had enjoyed playing an Australian sheep rancher grown wealthy on wool and mutton and looking for nothing better than to retire to the English countryside and become an English country gentleman. He had taken great pleasure in weekendening as guest of the gentry, shooting pheasant and dining elegantly. His next assignment might not provide the same high level of —

The library door swung suddenly open, freezing Morlock in the act of stowing the plans in an inner pocket of his dinner jacket.

“So! Caught you redhanded, you rotter! Betray my hospitality, would you?” Sir George’s voice, like the roar of a lion.

Morlock took a half step sideways to free himself for action. The corridor being dark, Sir George had only brought more darkness with him, so Morlock was as yet unsure what that action would be.

Sir George had the advantage. “Stand still.” Despite his anger, Sir George chuckled. “You make a splendid target against the french windows in the moonlight.”

Morlock let his shoulders sag and spoke in a defeated tone. “As you say, Sir George.”

But as Sir George did not follow his own advice and stand still, and instead made the mistake of striding confidently nearer and showing himself in the band of moonlight, Morlock moved.

Morlock swept up the heavy glass inkwell from the desk and hurled it, all in one continuous movement. The inkwell struck Sir George full on the brow and felled him, but not before his pistol discharged.

The force of the bullet spun Morlock about. He did not fall, but felt immediately dizzy. That would be shock. The bullet had passed through Morlock's right arm and lodged in his chest. He knew he was leaking a lot of blood: most likely dying. But he had his escape to make good, the plans to transmit, his mission to accomplish.

First his escape. The shot would fetch the servants. Morlock stepped quickly to the heavy door, closed it, and propped a chair under the doorknob, finding as he did so, that the bullet had rendered his right arm nerveless. And when Sir George stirred and started struggling to his feet, Morlock had to use his left hand to pick up the glass inkwell to complete the job. The left hand, too, picked up the pistol and jammed it in his pocket. As the first timid knock sounded on the door, Morlock slipped out through the french window and into the night.

Professor Alexander Chechele caught himself nodding over the proof sheets of the latest revision of his magnum opus *Good Usage* and rubbed his eyes and massaged his neck. Wearying business, trying to correct the errors, preserve minimum standards, hold back the barbarians.

He frowned. Something had brought him out of the momentary doze. A noise? He listened. A stir out there in the night. He creaked to his feet and pulled the drapes of his french windows slightly apart. He peered vaguely out across the moonlit lawns and neatly clipped hedges and their equally neat shadows. A to-do at the Fliflet household three lawns away, all the lights lit and figures moving about.

None of his affair. He shrugged and pulled the drapes to. But as he made his way back toward his desk, a tapping on the glass halted him. He turned

back around and parted the drapes again. A figure crouched low to keep from showing above the balustrade gestured for admittance.

Professor Chechele looked beyond the Fliflets' and hesitated. The figure gave a grunt of impatience, and with what proved to be a pistol shattered a pane. The pistol disappeared momentarily, a left hand reached in and awkwardly unlatched the french window, and the pistol reappeared in the left hand of the man who burst in.

"Quick, the drapes!"

"You mean *quickly*," Professor Chechele said automatically, but closed the drapes.

With a wave of the gun, the man gestured him backward, then seated himself in the professor's chair. He looked all done in, if not quite done for. His right sleeve was dark with blood and a patch of the same darkness stained the right side of his dinner jacket. The man was barely holding himself together. "I can go no further."

"You can go no *farther*," Professor Chechele said.

The man stared at him.

"Let me spare you the effort of speaking, at least until you find it necessary to correct me," Professor Chechele went on. "It would seem that you had a set-to with Sir George — I recognize the chasing on the pistol — and that you are now on the run. How is Sir George? You may indicate his condition with a nod or a shake of the head."

The man hesitated, then shook his head.

Sadly, Professor Chechele shook his own head. "He was more neighbor than friend, but I shall miss him. I suppose it is too much to expect that you are prepared to surrender to the authorities?"

The man smiled grimly. "I am a desperate man." Still holding the pistol, he freed thumb and little finger to draw folded sheets of paper from his inner pocket.

Professor Chechele weighed the odds and decided that frailty and slowness made successfully jump-

ing the man and wresting the pistol from him, or successfully dashing from the room and raising the alarm highly unlikely.

The man laid the papers on the desk. The gun pointed again at the professor. "These plans will make Vikky's throne very shaky."

A flush came to the professor's cheeks, a flash to his eyes. Ignoring the pistol, he stood as erect as when singing "God Save the Queen" and shook a finger. "In this house, sir, you will refer to Her Majesty as Queen Victoria."

Half-rising, the spy bowed stiffly, in not-entirely-mock respect. "I stand corrected. I am an honorable enemy." He sat back down, with a grimace. "The fact remains, your beloved monarch's domains will shrink. I tell you this so you will realize I am a desperate man, with nothing to lose. I haven't time for torturous explanations — "

"*Tortuous*, not torturous. A rambling discourse is tortuous. Though," the professor added to be fair, "to a listener it may be torturous."

"Enough talk," the man barked. "I can aim and fire this pistol with my left hand, but my right hand, my writing hand, will not hold the pen. Therefore, you will do me the service of addressing an envelope." He glanced at the professor's neatly arranged stationery. "I find your envelopes ideal for my purpose. They already bear your return address. You have merely to write a name and address at my direction." He got up with some effort. "Take the seat, please, and write."

"And if I refuse?"

The spy raised the pistol and the professor looked down its bore.

"I see."

The spy moved out of his way, and out of his reach, and the professor took the seat.

He took an envelope, dipped his pen in the inkwell, and waited.

The spy drew a ragged breath. "Address the

envelope to A. Tobit, Esq., presently staying at the White Swan, Stratford on Avon."

Professor Chechele opened his mouth to correct his visitor, then clamped it shut. He shot a glance toward his correspondence file, then looked down to hood the gleam in his eye. He gave his pen hand a preliminary, limbering-up twirl, then addressed the envelope in a flowing hand.

The man had been watching closely from where he stood. He swayed slightly but spoke firmly and the gun did not waver. "Thank you. Now if you'll be so kind as to stand up and move away from the desk — " And from its appurtenances, too, the man obviously meant, his eye having lingered on the heavy inkwell.

Professor Chechele rose slowly. A Shakespearean speech intoned itself across his mind.

*We are such stuff
As dreams are made on,
And our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.*

The spy took the professor's chair once more. He pressed his right arm to his chest, causing himself obvious but seemingly necessary pain. Still holding himself together. He sat a moment studying the address carefully. "Just so. Admirable handwriting, sir. Most legible."

He helped himself to the proper amount of postage from the professor's stamp box, and one-handedly stuffed the stolen plans inside the envelope, then sealed the flap firmly and pocketed the envelope. "Now to post this in a nearby pillar box."

Professor Chechele drew a deep breath. "I rather fancy you intend to leave me trussed up whilst you make your escape. You may use the curtain cords."

The spy smiled painfully. "Nice try, sir. But you know better than that. From talk at Sir George's, I'm aware that you are a professor and live alone. But surely a daily will show up tomorrow, one of your

colleagues or students. You would at once notify the authorities, who would intercept the plans before they reached Stratford On Avon and arrest my courier at the White Swan."

A great sadness swept over Professor Chechele. So much to do, so much he would have to leave undone.

The spy looked suddenly a deathly gray, drained of blood, and for a moment the professor had hope. But the spy drew strength from his feverish will and held the pistol steady on the professor.

"Sorry, professor. I feel badly about having to do this."

Professor Chechele smiled sorrowfully. He raised a finger. " 'I feel badly' means that your sense of touch is defective. You feel *bad* about — "

The shot cut him off.

Morlock shook his head. "Right to the end." He grimaced. He himself hadn't much longer. His face twisted and his body arched. He was in the squeeze of a great fist, the grip of death. But he would last till he had posted the envelope, then crawl to a hedgerow and hide. Let death seek him there.

The postmaster glared at the envelope. The address was plain — all too plain. A. Tobit, Esq., The White Swan, Stratford On Avon.

He turned his attention to the printed address of the sender, a name he knew well. The postmaster's anger mounted. To think that the professor, who had so vigorously supported his crusade, should now defect or suffer a lapse.

Vehemently, the postmaster stamped the envelope "Address Unknown. Return to Sender." The world had to learn to call Shakespeare's birthplace by its correct name. It was Stratford-upon-Avon, not Stratford On Avon. The postmaster was adamant in his desire to keep the name straight. Anyone who wished to correspond with an inhabitant of Stratford-upon-Avon would have to learn that. →



Kurt Thompson watched the storm clouds swirling out of the northeastern sky. Masses of dark wind churned menacingly. The air seemed to tumble over itself like thick lava rushing down the sides of an erupting volcano.

Three stories below the balcony on which Thompson stood, a handful of Caribbean beach boys scurried to secure the beach cabana where the towels and chairs were stored. Flags were raised to warn the

unknowing of the impending winds. Within the hour, the burning sunshine that blazed across the tiny island would be hidden behind the rolling storm clouds.

The weather would delay Susan's arrival. She hadn't been able to leave New York on Tuesday as planned — an emergency modeling job that would pay double-time. She'd told Kurt to go along without her; she'd fly down on the next available flight. Now Susan was stuck in San Juan until the storm passed, and the



The Hurricane Courier

meteorologists were guessing at anywhere from 12 to 48 hours.

"You cannot predict the wind," the man had told Kurt over the telephone.

Thompson took the keys to the rental car from his pocket and twirled them around his finger and then snapped them into his palm. Storm or no, he was going out.

The man in the dark blue sedan tapped the hard steering wheel. He checked his

watch. He glanced into the rear-view mirror, looked away, then looked behind the car once again. The curving dirt road on which he'd parked was deserted, as it had been since his arrival 37 minutes before.

He checked his watch. Tapped the steering wheel. Eyed the rear-view mirror.

Situated southwest of a slope lined with lush foliage, he didn't see the approaching clouds until the heavy round drops of rain splattered across his windshield. The raindrops hit the



ground with such force that bits of dust jumped from the road until the earth became saturated enough to hold the dirt down. The sky darkened quickly.

"The storm is early." The man spoke out loud. "It's not supposed to come until tomorrow," he protested to no one, raising his voice.

He banged his fist against the console, then wiped his palm over the inside of the windshield that fogged from the sudden drop in temperature that accompanied the rain. He checked his watch.

"She's late, goddammit. She's late."

There was a noise. He looked into the rear-view mirror, but couldn't see anything for the streaking lines of silver rain.

She departed the 727 carrying a nylon flight bag that she hung over her shoulder. One of the ground crew workers whistled at her, as she walked across the hot asphalt near the terminal. She smiled back politely, her expression making it clear that her response was not an invitation, only thanks.

The purple-inked seal was stamped on her passport at Customs without question. She was not required to fill out the usual forms.

The car rental kiosk was without a line. She walked directly to the counter. "Tessa George," she said. "You have a car for me."

The thin man behind the counter,

more tactful than most, waited until Tessa had lowered her eyes to sign the rental agreement before allowing his own eyes to feast upon her body; the sheer white material of her sundress allowed a perfect view of her smallish breasts. He smiled.

Tessa pushed the completed form back across the counter to him.

"You were quite lucky, Miss George," the man said, as he tore her copy of the agreement from the binder. "Your flight was the last allowed in today."

"Why is that?"

"Storm. Hurricane's here ahead of schedule."

Tessa had seen the clouds to the northeast as her plane had approached the island, but she hadn't realized the swiftness of their approach. "How long until it starts?" she asked, suddenly tense.

The man shrugged. "Half hour. Maybe more. Maybe less."

Tessa took the car keys and ran towards the exit, clutching the flight bag to her shoulder to keep from dropping it and holding the front of her dress to keep it from coming undone.

Two hours later, she was soaking wet. Her hair hung in wet clumps against her shoulders and her dress was stuck to her body like a second layer of skin. She shivered with cold as she shut herself into a phone booth just outside of town and dialed a series of 23 digits, pausing at predesignated times to wait until

the ring of a connecting line would patch her through to a new dial tone.

"Ten-six-one-oh-three."

"Courier. Number seven-five-nine-seven. Grid six. Latitude twenty-three. Response nine-nine-nine."

The line went dead.

Tessa hung up.

The phone rang.

When she answered, she repeated the code she had relayed to the central operator.

"You've got three minutes," a voice told her, establishing the amount of time during which it was safe to speak before an interception unit could pinpoint the location of her call.

Tessa recognized the voice as that of Field Supervisor Boxley, the head of CIA, West Indies. "Rendezvous incomplete," she said. "Pick-up agent fatality. One shot, presumably a pistol, to the temple. Fatal shot delivered at rendezvous site."

A series of clicking sounds bit through the long-distance connection. "We can't get to you because of the storm. You're going to have to hold on until it passes." Boxley awaited her reply, heard none, then asked, "Is that clear?"

Tessa said that it was, shouting to be heard over the wind. She couldn't tell if Boxley had disconnected at the other end or not, but she assumed he had and did likewise.

Clutching her flight bag, she leaned back in the glass enclosure and listened to the wind whipping

through the trees as the rain thudded threateningly against the metal top of the phone booth. She didn't know what she was carrying in the flight bag, except that it was a sealed, padded envelope about the size and weight of a hardcover book. Whatever it was, it was worth killing for. The man she was supposed to have met in the parked, dark blue sedan was dead. If the storm hadn't come crashing down all over the island, whomever had killed the man in the car might have waited nearby to kill her, too.

And that would remain a possibility until she passed the secret parcel onto whomever would be assigned to take the dead man's place.

With only a vague idea as to what to do next, Tessa drove slowly into town. She was cold. Turning on the little car's heater didn't help; the heater didn't work. Who would expect to have to use a heating unit on a Caribbean island? Tessa wondered, shivering as she flicked the fan switch back to its off position.

It was difficult to make out the shop signs along the side of the street as she entered the town. What the rain didn't blur, the wind did, wrenching signs wildly from side to side, banging them against the front walls of the shops to which they were attached.

Leaving the engine running, and turning on her emergency flashers, Tessa pulled close to the curb in



front of what looked to be a small grocery store. Once inside, she saw a short man with a balloon-like belly standing beside a refrigerated meat-case. His dark eyes were no more than black slits between his puffy cheeks and the overhang of his sloping forehead.

Tessa felt her grip on the flight bag tighten. She stayed just inside the front door. "I only need some paper. Like the kind you wrap meat in," she said, pointing to a roll of dull brown paper that sat atop the refrigerated case.

The man shrugged. "How much?" he asked.

Tessa held out her hands, measuring off about a yard.

The man unrolled slightly more than Tessa requested and ran a long meat knife down its width to cut it off. "Anything other?" he asked, not seeming to care at all what she wanted with the paper.

"Masking tape," Tessa said. She walked towards him, her hold on the flight bag easing. "La cinta?" she asked, wondering if that was the correct term in Spanish.

He bent over behind the counter, pushing aside a few objects before standing up with a half-used roll of two-inch wide tape.

"Fine," Tessa smiled, unzipping the side pocket to the flight bag to remove her wallet. "How much?"

She paid what he asked, then folded the brown paper into her flight bag along with the masking

tape and made for the front door. She ran out into the rain but never saw the man standing by her car until she hit him. She went flying. Her dress tore as she fell to the cement walkway and the flight bag dropped off her shoulder. Scurrying in the blinding rainfall, she pawed over the sidewalk trying to find her bag.

The man's hand grabbed her arm, pulling her to her feet, and handed her the flight bag as he pulled her under the cover of a nearby awning. The rain screamed down as the wind flapped hard against the canvas overhang.

"Are you all right?" the man nearly shouted, to be heard over the weather.

Tessa found his eyes; they were warm and brown. Friendly. She shook her head.

Without seeming at all self-conscious, the man adjusted the front of Tessa's water-drenched sundress to cover her exposed right breast. "I hope that's not your car," the man said, pointing to the two-door Toyota she'd rented at the airport.

The car's left fender was smashed in. The right rear wheel had jumped the sidewalk upon impact; it was now bent and without air.

"I didn't even see it until it was too late. The left flasher wasn't working, just the right; I thought it was only a motorcycle or something."

Tessa didn't speak. Her hand shook where it touched his forearm.

"Can I take you somewhere?" he

asked.

"I don't think you told me your name," she responded.

"Kurt. Kurt Thompson."

It took Thompson an hour to negotiate through the storm and make it back to his hotel. He took Tessa to his room and gave her the use of his shower.

While she was towelling off inside the steam-filled bathroom, Thompson stuck his hand inside, holding a terrycloth robe.

"This doesn't look like your size," Tessa said, tying the robe at her waist.

"It's my girlfriend's robe."

Tessa drew her wet hair back into a ponytail and let herself out of the bathroom. "She won't mind my being here?"

"Not if she doesn't know," Thompson smiled, propped up on the room's only bed, sitting atop the covers in dry clothes.

"Where is she?"

"Puerto Rico. She was flying in from New York when the storm hit."

"She's stranded there and I'm stranded here." Tessa had fabricated a story about having checked out of her hotel to fly home only to be grounded by the hurricane. "Did you have a chance to check any of the nearby hotels for a room for me, while I was showering?"

Thompson smiled. "They're all booked solid. Hurricane freaks. They all rushed in as soon as they heard

a storm was about to hit."

Tessa sat on the sofa across from his bed, and yawned. "I think I'm about to be anti-social," she said softly, closing her eyes.

When she fell asleep, Thompson carried her to the bed and put her under the covers. With his newfound friend resting comfortably, Thompson stood by the balcony door and watched the storm continue to roll sheets of hard, slanting rain through the sky. Hours later, he joined her in bed.

It was still dark outside, probably the middle of the night, Thompson thought, when he felt Tessa's weight shifting. She got out of bed. He watched her take her flight bag from beside the sofa, open it, and take out a folded rectangle of brown paper and a roll of masking tape.

She folded the paper over and over until its size was reduced to that of a book. Trying to remain quiet, she wrapped two bands of tape around the paper's width and two more bands around its length.

She put the tape back into the flight bag and then stuffed the folded and taped paper under the seat cushion of the chair that sat near the bathroom door. She checked the door to their room, making sure it was locked, and then got back into bed beside Thompson.

He pretended to sleep through the incident and lay there silently, wondering what he'd just seen take place.

Thompson was awake, watching the sky lighten to a medium grey, Tessa asleep beside him, when the phone rang. The shrill bell awakened Tessa with a start and she bolted upright as though shot from a spring.

Thompson picked up the phone.

"Are you expecting a call?" Tessa asked, before he could say hello.

Thompson shook his head, no. He listened to his caller, thanked him, and hung up.

"What was that?" Tessa's eyes shone fiercely, like a tiger's; her pulse pumped visibly in her neck.

Thompson shrugged, getting out of bed. "The desk manager said someone was coming up with a delivery for me." He put on his pants.

Tessa grabbed a fistful of the sheets. "Oh God. They've found me!"

Thompson saw her panicked expression. "What are you talking about?"

"They must have traced the rental car to me, and someone else must have taken down your license plate number when you hit my car." Tessa got out of bed and paced the floor. "How else could they have connected me to you?"

"What's going on?" Tessa's seemingly irrational actions were beginning to frighten him.

"I haven't got time to explain," she replied tensely, stripping off her bathrobe and grabbing his arm. "Just do what I say." She ripped the belt from the waistband of his pants,

handed it to him, and then sat in a chair by the balcony door and placed her arms and legs behind the chair as though she were tied into that position. "Hit me with the belt," she demanded urgently, "and shout that I should tell you where *it* is."

"What!"

"Just do it. Hurry up, he'll be here soon. Hit me hard. Across my chest."

"What the hell . . . ?"

"Goddammit, Kurt, just do it or we might both get killed."

Thompson's hands trembled at her threatening words. "Where is it?" he asked.

"Louder," Tessa whispered. "Shout it. Like you mean it."

"Where is it?" Thompson screamed.

"That's it; keep it up. And hit me." She saw him hesitate. "Go ahead, dammit."

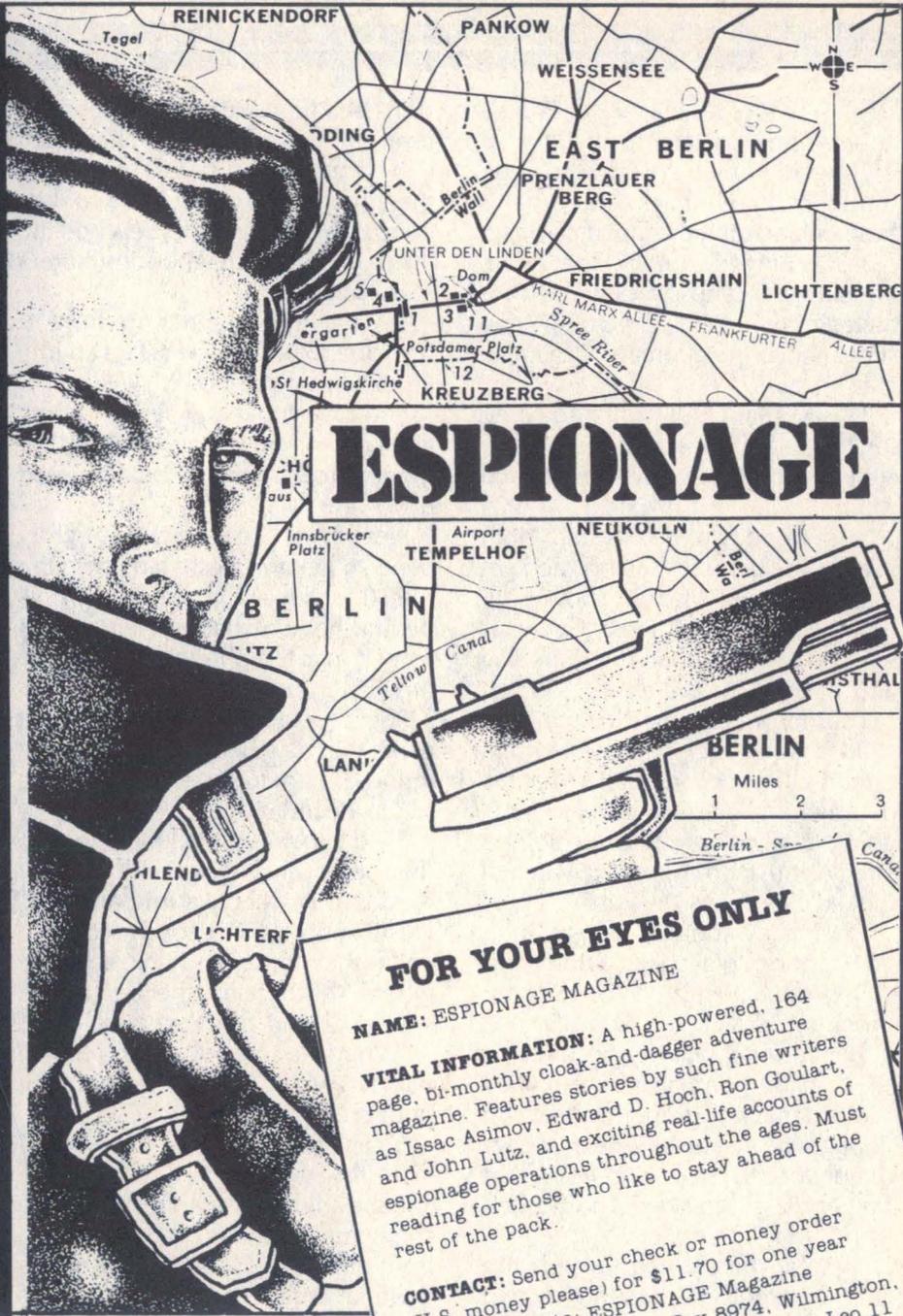
"Tell me where it is!" Thompson yelled. He drew back the belt and sent it half-heartedly onto her bicep.

"Harder! It's got to seem real. And keep yelling."

He cracked her right breast with the leather. The sound of her flesh being whipped snapped through the air. "Where is it! Tell me!"

The locked door to their hotel room came crashing open, propelled from the door frame by a forceful kick. A tall, muscular man with a silenced .38 charged into the room.

"Thank God you're here!" Tessa yelped. "It's under the seat cushion



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right next to you. Hurry up. There's another guard down the hall."

His gun pointed at Thompson, the intruder threw back the chair's cushion and took the taped package.

Tessa lunged out of the chair, knocking Thompson down with a naked body block. "Get going!" she screamed to the gunman. "I can take care of him."

The assailant had what he'd come for. He stuffed his gun into a holster strapped to his belt and ran from the room.

Tessa stood, grabbed the terrycloth robe from the foot of the bed and got into it. "Let's go," she told Thompson, helping him to his feet. "Get your shirt on." She grabbed her flight bag and headed for the door.

Thompson appeared dazed.

"He's going to be back here within minutes. If he doesn't realize that the package is a phoney, he's suddenly going to wonder how I was able to knock you to the ground when it looked like I was tied up."

Moving as though caught in a slow-motion playback, Thompson pulled on his shirt. "Why did you knock me down?"

"Because it suddenly occurred to me that the gunman might think I was in danger, and since he saw that I thought he was an ally, he may have killed you to save me from that danger." Tessa grabbed Thompson's arm. "Now let's go."

They ran barefooted towards the stairs, and took the three flights, two

steps at a time. Reaching the beach level, they ran into the pelting rain and raced for the hotel down near the point. They were both soaked through by the time they reached the overhang of the neighboring hotel's rear entrance.

Tessa pulled together the front of her robe. "Phone?" she asked an idle employee of the hotel.

The man looked at Tessa's figure, glanced at Thompson, took in her figure once more, and then pointed down the hall.

Her flight bag gripped tightly beneath her arm, Tessa ran down the tile floor, leaving wet footprints behind her. She had already closed herself into the phone booth by the time Thompson caught up.

She repeated the process she'd used the day before, after having found the man in the dark blue sedan dead.

Field Supervisor Boxley came onto the other end. "We have a new rendezvous, effective immediately." He ticked off 35 seconds worth of code that told Tessa to return to where she'd found the dead man yesterday, and disconnected.

"What's going on?" Thompson pleaded when Tessa came out of the phone booth.

"I can't explain now. I need a car."
"In this weather?"

Tessa adjusted her robe again. The soggy material was drooping down from her shoulders and chest. "Is there a rental car agency in this

place?"

Thompson saw her determination. "Take mine if you've got to do this."

Tessa shook her head. "I can't. That's how they traced me in the first place." She smacked her hand against the flight bag. "I don't have much time."

Thompson considered his mystery woman. "What's in that bag? Who do you work for?"

"I don't know and I can't tell you," she responded, answering both questions honestly.

Thompson turned towards the exit. "Come on. I'll steal you a car."

She followed him into the parking lot. The rain beat down hard around them, bouncing off the rooftops of the parked cars. The lot was deserted as Thompson walked quickly between the rows of automobiles, looking for one that was unlocked.

"You really know how to do this?" Tessa asked when he'd found an unsecured Datsun.

Thompson didn't reply. Taking a piece of torn sheet metal he'd pulled out of the dumpster near the edge of the lot, he popped the ignition switch. He quickly crossed a set of wires, and the car began to struggle to life. Thompson reached down to pump the accelerator with his hand. The car's engine turned over and revved strongly. "You want me to drive?" Thompson asked.

Standing in the rain, with her wet hair hanging in drenched clumps around her shoulders, Tessa shook

her head. "I can't take you with me, Kurt. I'm sorry."

He got out of the driver's compartment.

Tessa sat in the wet seat, tossing her flight bag onto the passenger seat. "I'll call you some time and explain all this," she said, closing the door. She backed out of the parking space and stopped. Rolling down her window, she stuck her head out into the pouring rain. "Thanks."

He was drinking a rum on the rocks with lime when the phone rang.

"Kurt?" the far-away sounding voice asked. "Are you alone?"

"Tessa. Are you all right? What the hell happened? Where are you?" He couldn't believe it was her. Once the clouds had carried off the rain, and the sun had reappeared, he'd almost convinced himself that the beautiful girl with her secret package had been a mere mirage.

She explained as much to him as she could without breaching security. "Is your girlfriend there?" Tessa finally asked.

Thompson swigged his drink. "She went back to New York. Puerto Rico was all the sun she could take."

"You're alone, then . . ."

"Yes."

"I could be there in ten minutes . . ."

"I can come get you . . ."

"I'll wait . . ."

"I'll hurry . . ." +

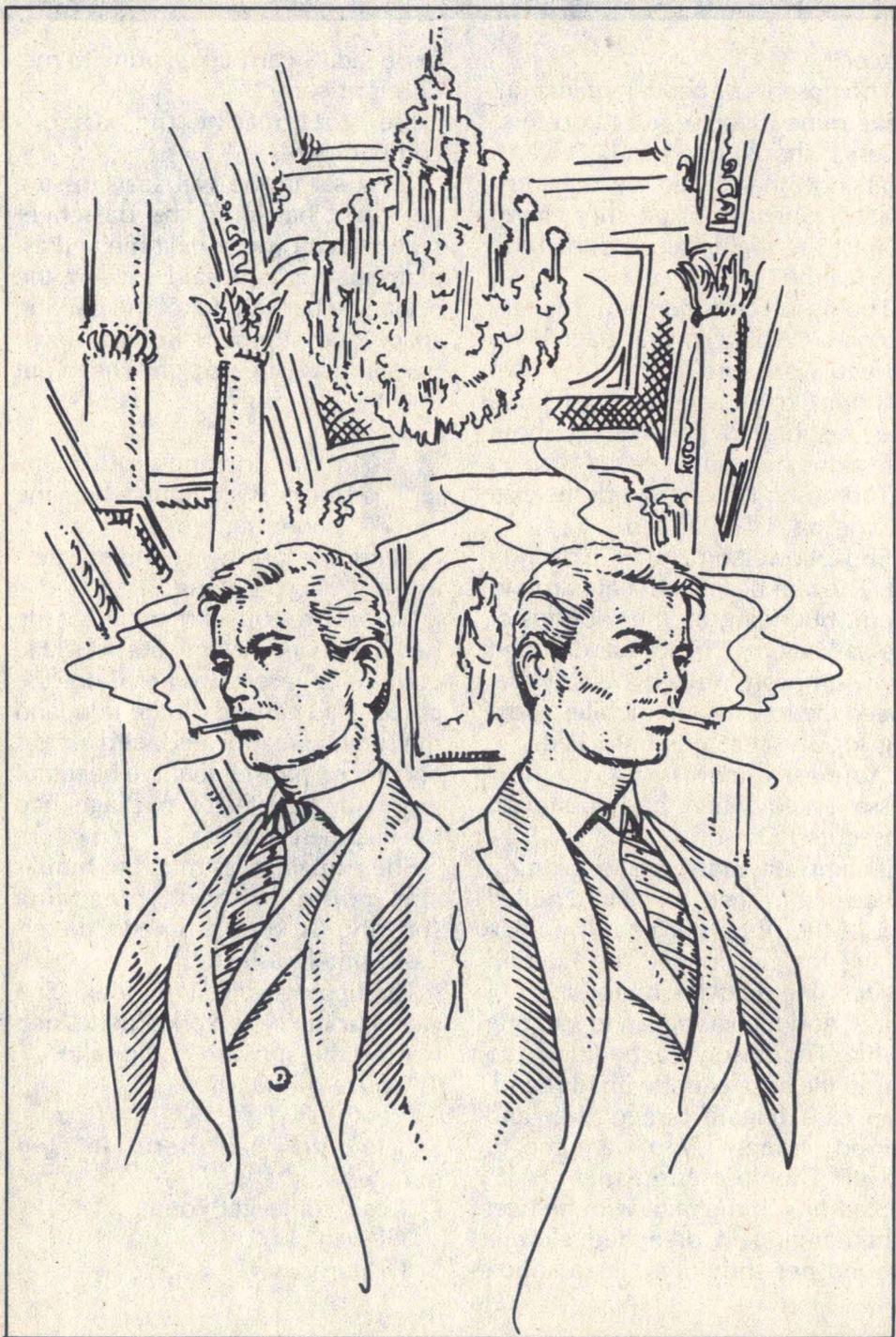


Illustration by Robert Spike

The Foreign Minister's Brother

by Stuart Symons

It all started like this. I was to kill a man and the Foreign Minister wasn't to know about it. The man I was to kill was the Foreign Minister's brother. His name was Alfred Keating. His mistress, it turned out, had been working all along for the East Germans. And dear old Alfred had been giving her our secrets. Anna Metz, that was her name, had already gone over. At least one of our agents in Vienna had heard she had. Alfred had supposedly gone into hiding, but had been seen by the same agent at the opera in Vienna. Foolish Alfred. Every agent in the West looking for him and he attends the opera. All of this, of course, according to C, who had always hated the Foreign Minister, but evidently hated his brother even more. Personally, I didn't even know the Foreign Minister had a brother.

But anyway, that's how it all started and that's why, as soon as C had telephoned me and given me the information, I had taken the first British Airways flight to Vienna.

"Your Perrier, Mr. Coulter."

I took the glass from the pretty flight attendant and drank a sip. I wanted a whiskey, but the doctor had said, no more, if I wanted to live. Actually I hadn't, until I had received C's telephone call about

Keating. But now, well . . .

The man across the aisle from me looked like an American businessman. He was working hard on an annual report. He was also drinking a whiskey and it didn't seem to be bothering him. I tried to pretend that the Perrier was something else, but it didn't work. I was just about to exchange it for a whiskey when we hit an air pocket, spilling the American's drink all over him and his annual report. That amused me until we landed in Flughafen-Schwechat outside Vienna 30 minutes later.

Harris, my contact in Austria, met me.

"He's been seen again," he said. We were inside his BMW and headed into the inner city.

"Who?" I asked. I was looking absently at the bleak winter scenes outside the car window.

"Keating." He looked at me. "Alfred Keating. Whom did you think?"

"I know, I know. I was just wondering, do you have any whiskey?"

"Here? You mean in the car?"

"Yes," I said.

"No. No, I don't."

"Too bad."

"At the hotel, perhaps. Won't that be soon enough?" He looked disgusted. "Why don't you get out, Coulter?" he said. "You're tired."

"I'm not ready," I said. "I'll get out when I'm ready."

We rode the rest of the way in silence.

We were in my room at the Hotel Imperial. I was lying on the bed. Harris was seated in a chair next to me. I had one whiskey under my belt, another on the way. Harris had a disgusted look on his face, still, but at least he was talking again.

"They're twins, you know," he said.

"No, I didn't know," I said. I took another sip of whiskey. "I suppose you mean the Foreign Minister

and his brother.”

“Exactly.”

He stood up, walked to the window, and looked out. Then he opened it. The cold air covered me on the bed. I could hear the sounds of the people on the Kärntnerring below. I wondered if Alfred Keating was among them. I sat up.

“No, I actually didn’t know they were twins,” I said. “In fact, I have to be honest with you. I didn’t even know the Foreign Minister had a brother until C told me.”

I noticed that Harris looked nervous.

“Most people don’t,” he said. He walked away from the window and sat down. “He has always avoided public life.”

“Yes, but surely . . .”

Harris interrupted me.

“It’s just that the Foreign Minister cannot afford a scandal at this particular point in his career, not with the Labour Party boys breathing down his neck.”

“And C has decided that the best way to avoid this is to do away with the Foreign Minister’s brother?”

Harris went to the bathroom. In a minute, I heard a flush, following by running water in the basin. He came back into the room and sat down.

“That’s about it,” he said. It was as though he had never left.

Then he stood up abruptly.

“We think he’ll be at the opera again tomorrow night. There’s a performance of ‘The Magic Flute.’ He has a special fondness for Mozart. Follow him after he leaves. Kill him anywhere. Just make sure he’s dead.”

“How will I recognize him?”

“You haven’t been listening, Coulter. He and the Foreign Minister are twins. You’ll recognize him.”

Harris left. I stared at the door for a few minutes, then drank the rest of the whiskey.

The service at the Hotel Imperial is superb. It

always has been, even in the old days. I had another bottle of whiskey in my room in five minutes. In another fifteen minutes, I was asleep.

I was shattered awake by the telephone — only it stopped ringing. A wrong number. My heart was pounding. It was dark. I listened carefully. But there was only the sound of traffic on the Kärntnerring. And it was bitterly cold in the room. I got up to shut the window. But standing there, looking out at the city, it suddenly felt good. Instead of closing the window, I opened it wider. Vienna. The secrets I knew. The years when I had been on top. When they called me first to do a job, because I was good. They knew I was good. I'd be good again.

I went back to bed and slept soundly.

The next morning, I ate breakfast, then took a tram to the Prater, so I could ride the Riesenrad. I had killed my first man in one of the box-like cars of that huge ferris wheel. It was 1950. The man had been supplying me with information about Soviet operations in their sector of Vienna, but he was getting scared. He was a minor official in their Ministry of Information. He thought they knew about him. He was sure he was being followed and he was afraid they would send him to Siberia. He wanted to go to London and wanted me to make all the arrangements for him and his family. *I can't*, I had said. *Nobody knows about you*. It had been a shock to him. He had thought all along that London knew who he was. When he threatened to expose me, I killed him and left him in the car. I heard somebody scream when he was found, but I was already in the crowd on the ground and gone. He was the first one. Nobody knew about that one. The ones I'd be told to kill would come later.

I had the car completely to myself. We had reached the top and had stopped. I could see Stephansdom, the Danube, and the Vienna Woods. I could almost hear the strains of a Strauss waltz. Somewhere out there was Alfred Keating, eating,

drinking, making love — if he had found a new mistress, and his kind usually did. Somewhere out there he was living the last day of his life.

I went back to the hotel and slept through lunch.

Later, I found a small bookshop just off the Kärntnerring, bought a copy of Graham Greene's *Der Dritte Mann*, *The Third Man* in English, and sat down on a park bench and began reading it.

Years ago I had seen the film and had been amazed at how it had captured the mood of Vienna in the late 40s. Those had been the good years, the good years for me, the years when I had been on top. It was nothing like the city today

I watched the young couples strolling by arm-in-arm, huddled together to feel each other and to keep warm. They paid no attention to me. It was getting colder. I turned up the collar to my coat and continued to read.

On the walk back to the hotel, it suddenly occurred to me that Keating might possibly not show up. I started to sweat. He had to. He was my last chance. But what if he didn't? What if he decided to attend the opera some other night? Or not at all? What if he had left Vienna already? I felt myself getting sick. I had to have a drink.

I ate a light dinner. The whiskey had calmed my nerves some, but I was still worried. I needed to be given a chance to prove that I was still capable. I had the chance now. Keating couldn't let me down. Tonight had to be the night.

I sat in the lobby and read *Neues Österreich* through twice. My hands were shaking and I felt myself getting short of breath. I smoked two packages of Gitanes. At 11:30, I left the hotel and walked to the corner of Kärntnerstrasse and the Opernring and stood by the tram stop. I would be able to see Keating leave the opera unnoticed. I would follow him until we reached a dark area and then I would shoot him, using the silencer. I didn't like being so close when I killed people, because it

was messy. But I had to make sure that everything went according to plan. I had to make sure he was dead. This was it. In the morning, I knew I'd be back on top. It had all started in Vienna. It was fitting that it should all begin again in Vienna, too.

He didn't show up. I waited until the trams stopped running, then walked back to the hotel. My hands and legs were numb from the cold. Damn him! Damn that Keating!

There was a bottle of whiskey on the stand beside my bed. I had ordered it earlier for a celebration. Now I used it to warm up and to kill the pains of defeat.

Sleep came hard, but finally.

Someone was knocking at the door. I opened my eyes. The sun from the open drapes blinded me. The knocking continued. My head was pounding. I stood up, walked unsteadily to the door, and opened it. It was Harris.

"He's been seen in Berlin," he said. "They think now that he'll try to go over that way. Clean up, get dressed, and get something in your stomach besides whiskey. I have you booked on the noon Austrian Airways flight to Berlin."

We hadn't even leveled off, but I needed to go to the W.C. After Harris had left me this morning I had been sick. Of course, there were a number of reasons why, but it was mostly the realization that I'd have another chance. It would be easier in Berlin. I knew all the possible escape routes into the East, routes that people like Keating had counted on since The Wall.

"Are you all right, Herr Coulter?" It was the flight attendant.

"Do you have any mineral water? It's my stomach. I think it might help."

"I'll get you some right away," she said.

We flew low over the city and landed at Tempelhof. Willis, our agent in Berlin, met me.

"We've booked you into the Hilton," he said. "We thought you'd like it there."

"Thanks," I said. "Where was he last seen?"

"Keating?"

"Whom did you think?"

"Oh, yes, right. Well, it was the uh . . . Café Stolz in the Kürfurstendamm. At least we think it was Keating. After all, he and the Foreign Minister are twins and the man looked like him."

After I had checked into the hotel, I walked to the Café Stolz. It was a relatively new cafe. I sat down and waited. Finally, a waiter came.

"*Ein Whiskey, bitte,*" I said.

He left, returned, and I drank. I waited for Keating through four whiskeys, hoping that he would show up again, but he didn't. Then I went back to my hotel.

I lay for a while on the bed drinking whiskey. Could Keating already be somewhere else, I wondered? Did he know I was chasing him? Was it a game he was playing with me? God, if I could only talk to C and tell him how much I wanted to succeed. I think he'd understand. He had trained me. He knew how good I had been. He must still have some faith in me or he wouldn't have given me this assignment.

I needed to talk to someone. I didn't want to talk to Willis. He was young and the young ones hated you. They were just like jackals, waiting for you to fall and then they'd eat you alive. I tried to think. Everyone I had known in Berlin was either dead or retired to the Bahamas, left to rot in the tropics. If I ever retired, I'd go up north, to Stockholm, perhaps, or to Helsinki, but never to an island in the Caribbean, left to sit around some hotel pool, with a drink in my hand, turning brown.

The telephone rang. It was Willis.

"He has a meeting tonight," he said. "One of my

contacts just told me. They think he's making arrangements to go over, maybe even after the meeting. It has to be tonight, Coulter."

God, I wanted to cry. Why was Willis doing this for me? My blood was surging.

"Tell me the address," I said. I was finding it hard to contain my excitement. To think that one of the young ones was giving me my chance. I'd remember Willis for this. I really would. I wouldn't tell him now. I didn't want him to think I was so desperate. But I'd remember.

"21 Kochstrasse, apartment two, near The Wall. Be careful. It's important, this job. Make the first shot count, Coulter. Make sure he's dead." There was a moment of silence. I was breathing heavily into the phone. Then Willis added, "And Coulter, I know how much this means to you. I really do."

"Thank you, Willis," I said.

I hung up the receiver. My hands were shaking. I sat down on the bed. I needed a drink. I went to the hotel bar and had a couple of whiskeys. I felt steadier, better than I had felt in a long time.

I left the hotel at midnight and walked to Kochstrasse. The apartment house at number 21 was one of the many that had been built hurriedly after the war as temporary housing. Most of them were still being used.

Apartment two was on the ground floor, at the rear of the building. It had a garden, thick with bushes and vines. Even leafless, they offered a good cover. I let myself in the gate. I tried a door. It was locked. But the lock was old and easily broken. The odor that hit me when I opened the door was of expensive perfume. I was surprised, but excited. This was it. I could hear voices faintly. I walked as softly as I could, letting the voices direct me. I passed through a kitchen and a sitting room. The voices were coming from the bedroom. I opened the door slowly. In the dim light I could see a man and woman lying naked on the bed. The man saw me

immediately.

"What the hell . . . who are you . . ."

The woman covered herself and started to scream.

"Don't," I said. "I'll not harm you." I pointed my gun. "It's him I want. Stand up, Keating!"

He stood up beside the bed. It was incredible. Alfred Keating and the Foreign Minister did look exactly alike.

"Do you mind if I put my pants on, old man?" Keating said.

"Stay where you are!"

I continued to stare. I couldn't get over it.

"It's incredible, you know," I said.

"What is?"

"How much you look like your brother."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about your brother, the Foreign Minister."

"You obviously know I'm the Foreign Minister or you wouldn't be here," he said sarcastically. "What is it you want? Are you planning to blackmail me because I have a German mistress?"

The man was laughing at me.

I could feel the sweat pouring off my skin. My stomach was churning. I knew I should have had another drink before I came.

"I don't understand. I thought . . ."

"Get up, Anna," he said. "Get dressed." It was obvious that he thought he was now in control of the situation.

"Anna?" I said. "Anna Metz?"

"Yes," the woman said slowly. "How did you know my name?" She turned and looked at Keating. He was visibly shaken.

"Stay where you are, both of you," I said. "Where's the telephone?"

Anna pointed to a table next to the bed. I picked up the receiver and dialed C's private number in London.

"It's done," I said, when C answered. "He's dead."

There was a pause, then C said, "What are you talking about, old man?"

"The Foreign Minister's brother. He's dead."

There was another pause, then C said slowly, "We need to talk, Coulter. We've been needing to talk for a long time. You're tired. You need out. Several of your friends in the Bahamas have been asking about you. Perhaps you'd like to visit them for a while. It would help you make up your mind."

"I don't understand," I said. "I did what you asked me to do."

"But Coulter," C said, "the Foreign Minister doesn't have a brother."

"I see," I said, and hung up the receiver.

I turned to the Foreign Minister and Anna.

"Put on your clothes, both of you."

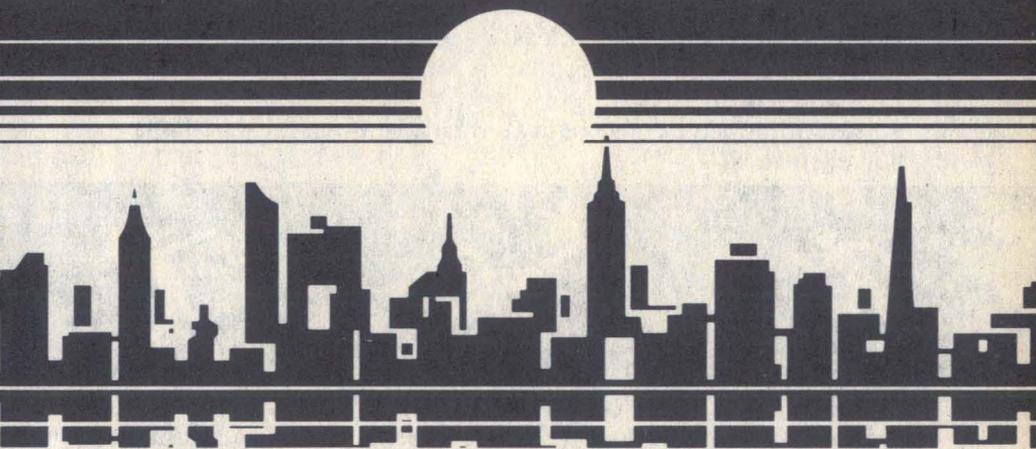
"I wish you'd explain what the hell is going on," the Foreign Minister said.

"I shall," I said, "but first, would you happen to have any whiskey in the house?" →

Did you know...

The telephone is one of the easiest methods by which to transmit information, but also one of the least secure. Tactical military formations frequently use radio-telephones for communication, although they and the enemy are well aware of the value of eavesdropping.

To counteract this problem, a most ingenious and thoroughly secure method of telephone security was developed by the United States Marine Corps in the Pacific during WW II. Near the end of the war, the Corps had 420 Navaho Indians specifically assigned to radio-telephone communications. Called "code talkers," they relayed messages in a combination of American slang, Navaho, and military jargon. Navaho was chosen for its complexity (for example "na ildil" means *You are accustomed to eat plural separable objects one at a time*) and because only twenty-eight people outside the tribe could understand it — none of whom were Germans or Japanese!



THE COMMISSAR

© 1968 by Jack Ritchie

Ah, how Nadia could run — like a gazelle, like an antelope — for at least ten seconds; Mariska too. For myself, I throw my weight around — which is the hammer.

On the upper deck of this Russian boat which travels to the sports meet in the United States, I stand and eat a sandwich while I watch these Russians at mass exercise, back and forth, right and left, and up and down.

It is not that we Hungarians do not exercise. It is simply that we are more individual about this. We do not want a loud-voice

on a platform telling us what to do — especially if it is in Russian.

I observe the women's group down below and the overwhelming number of sturdy legs, but Nadia does not have sturdy legs. They are long and at a glance one sees that she can run and probably must, for she has lustrous black hair and violet eyes and one thinks of the ballet rather than the cinder track.

Mariska appears at my side "You are watching Nadia again?" she asked, "That *Russian*?"

Mariska is the fastest woman in all Hungary. This is true also for events in Poland and Italy. However, in Western Germany and France, she comes in second to Nadia in the 100 meter dash.

It is obvious that Mariska is very jealous of Nadia's running — fifty percent of the time, at least — and from the narrowness of her eyes, I have the feeling that in America they will settle this once and for all.

"We should have defected in Germany or France," Mariska says. "Or even Italy."



I shake my head. "No, Mariska. Since our ultimate goal is the freedom of America, does it not pay to remain with the team until it arrives there? In this manner we are assured free passage."

We become aware that Boris Volakov has moved beside us.

Boris is a most unpopular man. He is commissar for the Russian team, plus in overall charge of the voyage. It is a rumor that his unfavorable reports have caused the disappearance of one high-jumper, one long distance runner, and one hop, skip, and jump.

"You are attending the All-Nations Friendship Party on board tomorrow night?" he asks.

With the Russians, we speak English. It is a beautiful language and besides it irritates them.

"I am sorry," Mariska says, "but I am developing a cold."

"I have this trouble with my sinuses," I say. "This always requires forty-eight hours for the cure."

Boris smiles like a shark and is not disturbed. "I have talked to the leaders of all nationalities and they will see that medical problems of that nature are cleared up by the time of the party."

He looks Mariska up and down. "I have always admired the Hungarians. I have spent some time in Budapest."

"Oh?" Mariska says with great sweetness. "As a tourist?"

He clears his throat. "Not exactly."

Now, on the deck below, the exercises have come to a close and the group is dismissed.

Boris excuses himself and walks toward the iron stairs which lead to the lower decks.

Nadia looks up and sees that he is coming down. Very casually, but firmly, she begins to walk away.

It is interesting to watch — from my height — this pursuit and the evasion, this looking back over the shoulder, this increasing of the pace, this series of sharp right and left turns around lifeboats and funnels.

I study the situation and see that eventually she is about to be trapped — for Boris is tricky and foresighted.

"I think I will go downstairs," I say to Mariska.



She looks at me but says nothing.

I go down the stairs and after five minutes, manage to intercept Nadia. "This way," I say, and take her arm.

"Oh," she says, "it is you again," for we have met and talked before whenever I was able to create the opportunity.

She comes where I take her, which is to crouch behind a winch, and we wait. Soon Boris passes by, the yellow gleam of pursuit still in his eyes.

Nadia takes a deep breath. "So far I have been saved by one thing or another, but I am running out of miracles and excuses."

"Why are excuses even necessary?" I say. "Is not a simple 'no' in his face enough?"

She looks at me like I am a child. "Life is not always that simple. Boris is a man of much influence."

"Ah yes," I say wisely. "I understand that he has sent three men to Siberia."

She smiles, but tightly. "They were not men and they were not sent to Siberia. We are no longer that primitive in the treatment

of our athletes. They were women who said 'no' and they were simply dismissed from the team. Today they are teaching calisthenics to pre-school children in Kandalaksha, which is just beyond the Arctic Circle, but still in Europe."

"Nadia," I say, "France is a nice country and free — in a capitalistic way, of course — and this is true also of Western Germany and Italy. Why did you not seek asylum in one of these places? It is unlikely that Boris would have continued pursuit."

She shakes her head. "No. I could not do anything like that."

"You have relatives in Russia? They would be liquidated?"

"We no longer liquidate relatives," she says stiffly. "However, I do not wish to leave the team. It is a great honor to be a member and this I would not willingly give up."

I feel anger stirring. "So remaining on the team is of greater importance than your honor?"

She looks frosty. "I would prefer to have both."

She thinks more on the subject of Boris. "He is the commissar



of the athletes," she says bitterly, "but in his life he has yet to run even one hundred meter dash. He is greedy and opportunistic. He goes as the wind blows — whenever it is easiest, wherever he has the most to gain for himself. This is how he has come to his present position, after beginning as the custodian of uniforms. Also, I think that in Russia he was a speculator in the black market, but has always been too clever to be caught."

I rub my jaw. To me has come the expression that if a mountain does not come to the Mohammedans, then it is necessary for the Mohammedans to go to the mountain. "Do not despair," I say, "I will personally work on this problem."

That evening in the dining room, I sit at Boris' table — which is easy, for there is always room — and over tea I ask, "Have you ever been to New York?"

"No," Boris says. "I know nothing about America except that the poor are exploited by the rich."

"How true," I say, and then sigh. "It is unfortunate, but I will not be able to visit my cousin Stephen when we arrive there. He

is one of these rich exploiters.”

Boris is interested. “Rich? But why can you not go see him?”

I smiled sadly. “Because he is a defector and as a loyal member of the party, I certainly would not want to be seen in his presence. He fled from Hungary two years ago.”

Boris’ mind fastened on one point. “A *rich* defector? Before he defected, did he somehow manage to — ah — transfer money to some Swiss bank? Hm?”

“No,” I say. “When Stephen arrived in America, he was penniless.”

Boris thinks on this too. “He defected but two years ago, but *today* he is rich?”

I nod. “He has a large estate in Hoboken, a swimming pool, two limousines, three mistresses, and eight horses.”

Boris is impressed. “Three? But how did this all happen?”

“It is all the responsibility of his agent, who has the strange American name of John Smith. This John Smith has Stephen’s ex-



periences written into a book which has become a best seller. And also it will soon be made into a motion picture in which Stephen will hold a percentage.”

Boris is puzzled. “But there are tens of thousands of defectors. Surely not every one of them could write a book and expect to make so much money?”

“Of course not,” I say. “But Stephen was an important man behind the Iron... ” I clear my throat, “...in our country. He was a *commissar* overseeing the Fejer Building Institute. Perhaps you have heard of his book? *I Was a Commissar for the F.B.I.*?”

Boris frowns. “It is somehow vaguely familiar.”

“People are extremely interested in Stephen,” I say. “There is a shortage of commissars in America, for not many of them defect. They know when they have it good.”

Boris agrees. “Good, yes. But riches, no.” He looks very casual. “This John Smith agent, where does he live, this capitalist pig?”

“In Chicago at a place called State Street. Probably his name is in the telephone book.”

When I rise to leave, Boris is still thinking about my cousin Stephen, who does not exist.

The night of the Friendship Party there comes a thick fog upon the ocean and it is necessary for the ship to slow almost to a halt and blow its horns often. Even so, we almost run into other ships, for we are now near New York and the traffic lanes are heavy.

In the dining room, I find that Nadia, Mariska, and I have been assigned to Boris' table.

He talks hardly at all. Mostly he is preoccupied and he drinks a good deal.

It is a yawning evening until ten when there is trouble in the bar among the united Czechoslovakians. The Czechs and the Slovaks begin to fight and the Ruthenians watch and smile.

When order is restored, I notice that Boris has left his previous thoughts and is now looking at Nadia.

His voice is thick with the drink. "Nadia, let us, you and I, walk about the deck."



"No," Nadia says. "The fog is bad for my throat."

"You are not a singer," Boris snaps and then glares at her.

"How would you like to teach calisthenics to pre-school children?"

The band strikes up with dance music and I immediately sweep Nadia upon the floor.

"Nadia," I say, "this is not the moment to spill the soup in the ointment. You must cooperate with Boris for the time being."

She is shocked. "You, of all people, to say *that*?"

I explain hastily. "I mean only for this walk on the foggy deck. You can come to no harm, for I think that he has drunk too much to be dangerous. I even wonder whether he can still walk at all."

She studies me. "Just what are you up to, Janos?"

I smile. "I have a clever plan and I will tell you when it works. I have the feeling that soon you will never see Boris again."

When we return from the dance, Nadia is more friendly and soon she and Boris rise and move toward the door. He walks much better than I anticipate and so I begin to worry.

Finally I too rise and walk out into the fog. I hesitate. Where have they gone? To the right or to the left? I listen, but I hear nothing.

I turn to the right and after a dozen steps I bump into two people who are much close together. I recognize the man as a Czech high-jumper and the woman as a Rumanian gymnast, which is bad politics at the present time, but they do not seem to care.

"Pardon," I say. "Did anyone pass this way recently?"

The man peers into my face and is relieved that I am not a commissar. "No," he says. "Not that we notice."

I go in the opposite direction, bumping into objects occasionally and listening. All I hear is the groan of horns near and far, and when there is no horn noise, it appears that I am in a vacuum of silence. I think that I may have taken the wrong direction after all, but then I hear the commencing of a scream. It is muffled by the fog and yet I feel that it is near.

I press on immediately and after only twenty feet I come upon



Boris and Nadia, and I see that he is considerably less drunk than I had thought. When I see what could be impending, fury springs into my blood and I forget all about Mohammedans and their mountains. I spring forward shouting a nationalist war cry.

Boris is considerably surprised by my entrance out of the fog, but he becomes even more so when I immediately grasp him by one arm and one leg and swing him in a circle...once...twice...and then I let go.

It was a great fling, perhaps a world's record for this type of event. Boris and his scream fly through a thin patch in the fog and over the ship's rail.

Nadia joins me as we look into the swirling white gray which hides the water.

"Was this your clever plan?" she asks.

"No," I say sadly. "There is many a slip between the cup and the ship."

We are now silent and I try to think about this predicament.

"Nadia," I finally say, "I will surrender myself and confess. I

will say that you were not even here. It was a personal quarrel.”

“Nonsense,” Nadia says. “Since no one has rushed here, evidently the fog muffled his scream and he was not heard. We will simply walk away. Boris just disappeared and we know nothing about it at all.”

“But you were seen leaving the ballroom with him,” I say. “There will be questions asked. And there is no Supreme Court to throw out the confession that will inevitably follow.”

Nadia offers another idea. “We will say it was an accident which we both witnessed. Boris slipped and fell overboard.”

I shook my head. “I do not think we will be believed. It is generally established that commissars do not meet death by accident.”

We are silent again and then I sigh. “Nadia, I do not worry for myself. If no one heard the scream, I do not think that Boris will be missed before tomorrow and we will have arrived in New York by then. Freedom is but a leap or dash beyond.”



She is wide-eyed. “You are going to defect?”

“Yes,” I say. “We have planned upon this for a long time.”

The wide eyes become narrow eyes. “We? Who is we?”

“Mariska and I.”

Her lips tighten. It is strange how these women athletes are so jealous of each other’s ability to run. Among men, there is more sportsmanship.

“America is a big country,” I say. “It is big enough for *two* runners of excellence.”

“I doubt this,” she says, but sighs. “However, I do not think I have much of a choice.”

We arrive in clear weather at the Port of New York the next morning. Soon we descend the gangplank while the ship’s loudspeaker calls out for Boris to report to his contingent.

There is a rumor — which Nadia and I have started — that Boris has drunk too much and fallen asleep in some corner of the ship.

We step without trouble onto American soil and are taken to the hotel.

I would have preferred to participate in the sports meet before defecting — as would Nadia and Mariska — but to postpone our defecting could possibly be fatal. So at the first opportunity, the three of us join and find the nearest police station and declare ourselves to be political refugees.

It is something I have never regretted, and three months later — at my wedding — I see Bela, a pole vaulter on our team who also defected, but after the meet. Evidently he has heard that I was to marry and wished to attend the event.

We shake hands and he smiles. “So it was you who threw Boris overboard,” he says.

Perhaps I pale a bit, for if this is made public information, I am ruined. The Americans would not shield a murderer, even if the victim is a Russian. “Did you witness the event?” I asked quickly.

He shakes his head. “No. But I have just heard that Boris himself maintains that this happened.”



I blinked. “Boris Volakov is alive?”

Bella smiles. “You tossed him overboard just as a small freighter glided past in the fog, and Boris landed unnoticed on the canvas top of a lifeboat. The length of the fall however, rendered him unconscious for perhaps a half hour.”

I take a breath of relief.

Bela continues. “When Boris awoke and ascertained that he was alive and on another ship, he rushed immediately to the captain on the bridge and announced that he was declaring himself a political refugee who wished to remain in the west, and he also wanted to send swiftly a radiogram to a Mr. John Smith of State Street, Chicago.”

I sighed. “So Boris is now in America?”

Bela smiled again. “No. Unfortunately for Boris, the ship upon which you tossed him turned out to be a Russian freighter.”

It was a successful wedding. I was handsome and Nadia, my bride, looked beautiful.

The maid of honor, of course, was Mariska, my sister. →

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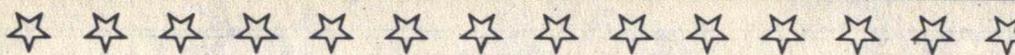
HISTORICALLY

He had been captured the night before, a young man on a mission of intrigue. On his person was a Yale diploma and a map outlining British military strength on Long Island. The diploma suggested that he was who he said he was, a loyalist school teacher fleeing revolutionary Connecticut. The map said otherwise. On the morning of September 22, 1776, he was hanged on Manhattan Island, sentenced without trial for spying on the British. His prostrate body dangled for three days — testimony to British will. His last words were recorded by a British sergeant: “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.”

Nathan Hale was reared in Coventry, Connecticut. He entered Yale at the age of fourteen, where he studied the classics. He also found time to become an accomplished wrestler and member of the debating society. He debated with fellow spy and patriot, Benjamin Tallmadge, at their commencement. After graduation, Hale took on the position of teacher of classical languages at the Union Grammar School in New London, Connecticut.

News of the battles at Lexington and Concord reached New London on April 20, 1775. That night, at a town meeting, Hale rose to speak. Addressing his fellow townsfolk with emotion and conviction, he argued not only that they should aid their brethren in Massachusetts — the popular concensus and their subsequent action — but called for independence as well. “Let us march at once and never lay down our arms until independence is won.”

Hale remained at the school until the clear call of



commit himself to duty.

During the weeks preceding the eventual fall of New York that summer, General Washington grew increasingly frustrated at the lack of military intelligence available to him, and at the corresponding wealth of information the British seemed to be gathering. In a letter to his commanders, Washington outlined the need for an intelligence network of some sort. "As everything in a way depends on obtaining intelligence of the enemy's movements, leave no stone unturned, nor do not stick at any expense, as I was never more uneasy than on account of my want for knowledge on this score."

Washington's words fell on Hale's ears. Hale wrestled with the decision to become a spy for several days. The role was one of dubious honor in the eyes of many, but Hale overcame the hurdle. Explaining his motives to a friend, who counseled against his decision, he said, "For a year I have been attached to the army, and have not rendered any material service. I wish to be useful, and every kind of service, necessary to the public good, becomes honourable by being necessary. If the exigencies of my country demand a peculiar service, its claims to perform that service are imperious."

Despite this testimony of devotion to his country, Hale would nonetheless be deprived of "rendering any material service." His mission took him across Long Island Sound, to Huntington Bay, where he was to spy on the British. He was detected early, as he made his way across the Sound, and thereafter trailed. He was captured after he had collected some bits of information — before they could be passed on — and brought to Manhattan where he was hung. His career as a spy lasted a total of six days.

A final note about those last words for which Hale is famous. Hale appeared to have been quoting from Cato, speaking as he views his dead son, Marcus.

*How beautiful is death when earned by virtue.
Who would not be that youth? What pity it is
that we can die but once to serve our country. +*

A Boy and His Camera

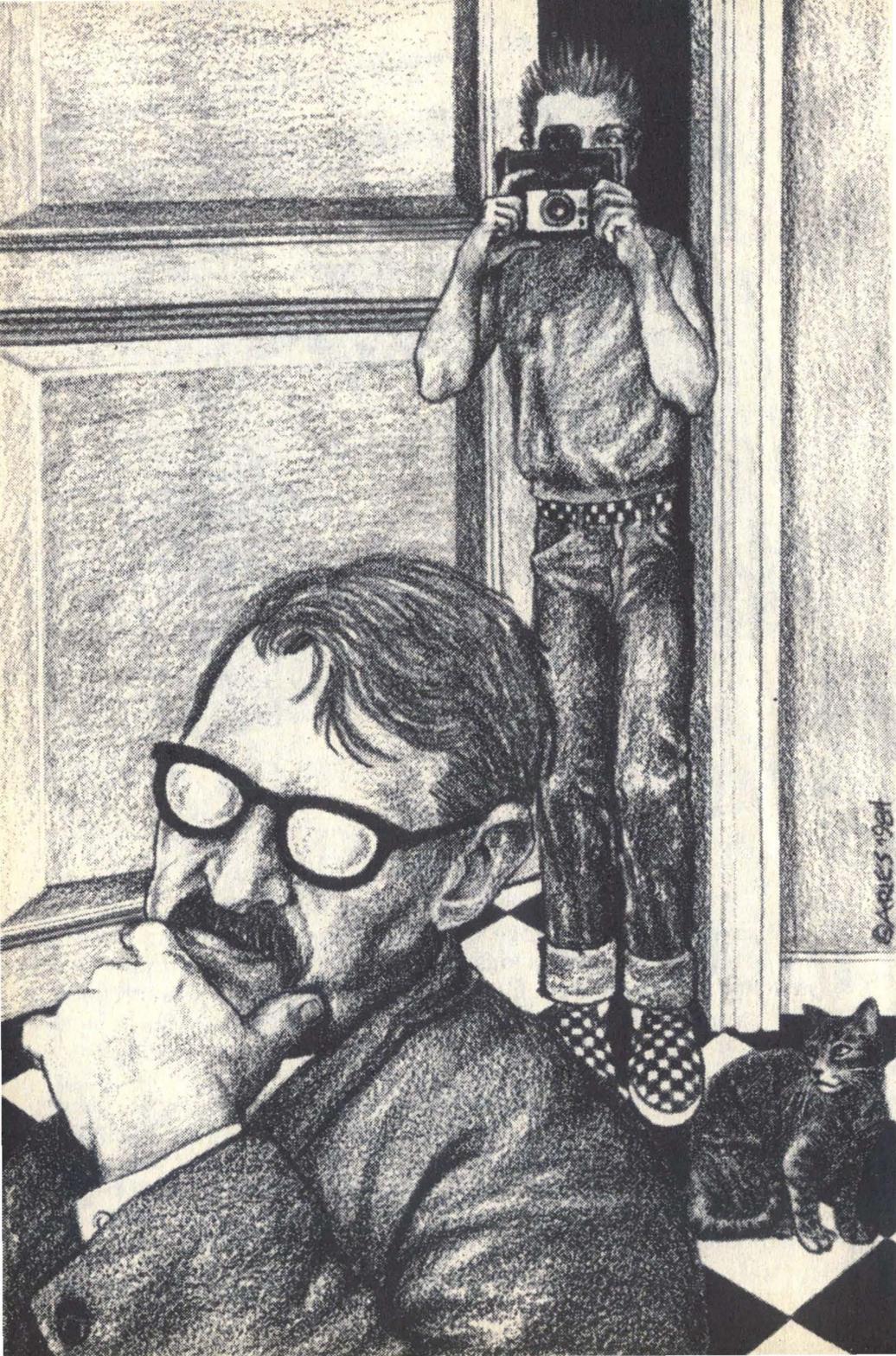
By Jerry Tillotson

It was a week since Harry Rogers had assigned his precocious students the topic for their semester project: *My Family*.

They were to use their proven talents in any way they chose, to interpret their feelings about their families. Cindy James was already working on a ballet that centered around her widowed mom and two younger sisters. Clarence Pigeon, a musical prodigy, was composing a

mini rock opera describing life with his two computer expert parents.

Everyone in the Advanced Arts Class was working their socks off to triumph over all others to win the approval of their charming instructor. Everybody except Tommy Roebuck. Like all students at the Hallmark Private Academy, his I.Q. was genius level. At twelve, he already displayed signs of becoming an extraordinary photographer. What he could do



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with a simple Polaroid camera was uncanny; he had won second place in the *Washington Post's* Amateur Photographer Contest last year, submitting a picture of his cat, Tiger, preparing to attack an unsuspecting robin.

But Tommy was not doing anything on his project and did not show any signs of being in preparation. His work area was a jumble of books and posters of rock stars and there were no indications of creative endeavor. When the bell rang that afternoon, the teacher asked Tommy to stay behind.

Harry leaned back in his chair and put his hands behind his head. "Hey, buddy, what's wrong, huh? Something bugging you? Come on, Tommy, you can tell me. I'm your friend."

Just as the teacher was handsome, witty, articulate and beloved by students and faculty, Tommy was thin, frail, and anonymous though his red hair was slicked up into greasy spikes in a brave attempt to look "punk." That was the big look at Hallmark: New Wave, Punk, Tough. Not yet teenagers, they startled even the sophisticated Harry Rogers when he overheard parts of their chatter. It was always about sex, drugs, rock, and videos.

Now, the student's mouth tightened as he studied the teacher's manicured nails. His own were bitten to the quick. "It's my dad. He . . . we . . . don't hit it off so good. He won't let me do anything

I really want to do."

Harry leaned forward. His face was warm with compassion. "And what's that, Tommy?"

Eagerly, the boy poured out his complaints. Dr. Orville Roebuck would not permit his son to eat candy or cookies or Big Macs — or drink Cokes. Worse still, the scientist would not allow a television set inside the Roebuck household. Television caused brain rot, he said. He didn't mind a radio or a record player. But not a boob tube.

Tommy's eyes watered as he added with a sigh: "I can't even watch the rock videos. That's where all the kids have gone now; to somebody's house to watch the *Top 40 Videos*. They come on every day at five."

"Look," began Harry Rogers. "I'm really sorry to hear all this, Tommy. I understand what you're going through, buddy, but you can't let that stop you from working on your project. You're a wonderful photographer. That's why I let you into my class. A lot of kids would give their eyeteeth to be where you are . . . but you've not done anything. All you need to do is push a button and, snap, you've got a picture of your family."

"Mom's dead. Died a year ago of cancer."

"Sorry, I forgot. Then get pictures of your father. He has an office at home, doesn't he? Tommy, we want a creative record of your family life. Your father, your cat, your . . ."

"Dad's a twerp!" His snort was an

heroic attempt to sound tough. It didn't quite come off.

Harry Rogers was genuinely amazed at this statement. "Tommy! Your father's a famous scientist. He helped get the space shuttle off the ground."

The boy pushed the tip of his Adidas covered foot against the desk. "Him and those old rockets. That's all he does. Work on space ships. And now there's that new space thing and . . . oops!" Tommy covered his mouth. His eyes widened in fright. "You won't tell anybody I said that, will you? That's *real* confidential! Nobody's supposed to know anything about it."

Harry smiled. "Calm down, buddy. I won't say anything. But I . . . I thought he'd retired from NASA. Seems like I read something about him leaving the space project last year."

Tommy shrugged his narrow shoulders. He seemed relieved the teacher had taken it so lightly. "Yeah. Guess so. I can't say anything about that. It's confidential."

He was looking at the big Sony color TV set over in the corner. Mr. Rogers kept it so his class could watch special events, like the attempted assassination of President Reagan, or a special session of Congress. Sometimes, he showed his pupils *Our Gang* comedies. It was a fascinating sociological comparison: the Depression kids of the Thirties, with their ideas of fun, versus those of today, steeped in an ambiance of

space travel, terrorism and pop culture.

Watching him, the teacher made a decision. "Okay, I'll tell you what. We'll make a deal. It's nearly five. You can watch the *Top 40 Videos*, if — and I repeat, if — you bring in some pictures tomorrow of your home life. Since it's just you and your father, show him at work."

Tommy was hurrying over to the set. "Yeah, okay, I'll do it, but let's get to the videos. Michael Jackson's supposed to be on today."

The Polaroid shots Tommy brought in the next day were superb. Harry Rogers studied them intently after Tommy had taped them into his project scrapbook. In one, a big tabby cat snoozed on a window sill. In another, a husky looking man, probably in his late thirties, sat slumped in his chair before a large desk. In the background was a huge map of the world. The composition of the setting and the lighting were excellent.

"Daddy didn't want me to shoot him at his desk," Tommy grinned. "Says he's working on something really top secret like I said. He didn't know I got this. He likes to drink a lot after supper."

The art instructor expressed great concern. "Good Lord, Tommy, we don't want your father getting mad at us. Of course you don't want to photograph anything highly classified. He might be working on a new space craft or satellite or a

time machine or a flying saucer. Who knows?

"Still . . . wouldn't it be wonderful to look back from some future date and trace a whole year of one's life through a particular work project?" His father would be proud of him, the teacher pointed out.

The boy's face looked unusually old in the fading light of the classroom. "He's always mad at me. 'Tommy do this. Tommy do that,' " he mimicked. "He's mean a lot of times, too; not funny and nice like you are. Always correcting me . . . I wish I was grown-up; boy I'd show him! Boy I'd sure like to get even with him."

Harry Rogers sighed and lit a cigarette. He recalled "Family Night," which Hallmark School held at the beginning of the school year. It gave the faculty a chance to meet the parents of all their bright, young charges, some of whom would go on to make names for themselves. A sizable portion would vanish into suburbia, of course, never to display brilliance again, and a smaller group would end up drug addicts, alcoholics and suicides. Being a genius didn't necessarily equip one for the realities of life.

Sociability was not one of Dr. Roebuck's strong points. Extremely shy, sweating profusely, his sensitive dark eyes peered out through thick, black-rimmed glasses, never leaving his equally ill-at-ease son. "Shake hands with Mr. Rogers, son . . . don't act like a block of wood . . . say thank you for the compliment . . .

Tommy's in one of his bad moods, ha, ha, ha . . . you'll have to excuse him."

"How . . . if you could, how would you get even with him, Tommy?" the teacher asked quietly. "Uh oh, if you're thinking of trying to sneak into his confidential files, you'd better forget it. You aren't the Hardy Boys, you know. Try it and you'd really get our you-know-whats in a sling."

Tommy laughed. It changed his whole appearance. Suddenly, he looked very boyish, impish, likable. "Can I catch the videos, now?" he asked. His instructor eagerly gave his permission.

While "Culture Club" was on, Harry slipped the boy a Snickers candy bar and a Coke. Before he left, Tommy again adopted a tough guy swagger. He even pulled up the collar of his denim jacket. "Dad's always telling me I've got a lot to learn. I'm really gonna surprise him."

Choosing his words carefully, the young teacher spoke into the phone that night. He informed his New York contact that the first entré had been made into the group. He had actual photographs of a *friend* at home — which didn't show much — "but it's a start."

Infiltrating the "Brainy Dozen" — a group of twelve brilliant aeronautical scientists — had become an obsession for foreign agents like Harry Rogers. These men

were responsible for the spectacular success of America's space shuttle, *The Columbia*. Strong evidence and intense rumor indicated that the Brainy Dozen were embarked on an even more ambitious project: the creation of a super satellite, a Flash Gordon type vehicle that would actually be an arsenal of missiles, laser beam driven cannons and other incredible weapons that were reminiscent of the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* movies.

Dr. Orville Roebuck was a key member of the Brainy Dozen. It was strongly believed that he was the spark plug of the whole group.

As a school boy in England, Harry Rogers had been obsessed with growing up and becoming the socialistic James Bond – fighting the good fight against the capitalistic evils of the West. At Oxford, he had quickly discovered and become part of a passionate band of young communists, several of whom went into espionage work in highly public jobs, becoming teachers, journalists and tour guides.

Harry was fascinated by the dual careers of his old cronies, who managed to live very well on secrets stolen from the United States and paid for by the communists. He often toyed with the idea of becoming a "spy," but it wasn't until he was teaching school in Washington D.C. that it became feasible. He was urged by some of his old school

chums to try to infiltrate the Brainy Dozen (through Dr. Roebuck), contacted chiefly because he had become an extremely popular teacher. It was time for him to stop being a theorist, he was told, and to put his convictions into practice.

There was shrewd logic at work here. Of all the members of the Brainy Dozen, Orville Roebuck was considered the most vulnerable. He was a desperately lonely man who had never recovered from the death of his wife. Consequently, he had shut himself off from Tommy, as well. Only he, his son, a cat, and a part-time housekeeper lived in their one-story house on the outskirts of Washington.

The portrait painted of the vulnerable Dr. Roebuck showed the following: he was a fiend for work, preferring to do most of his work in the office he'd built at home, despite admonitions from his superiors, and he was a tyrant. He wanted things done his way – God help those who refused to toe the line!

Harry Rogers used his considerable charm and genuine teaching record to secure a position in the small progressive school where Tommy Roebuck was enrolled. The position had become available as the result of a tragic car accident in which the young woman who had previously taught the Advanced Arts class had perished.

Harry was wonderful with children and quickly became an asset to the school.

The Hallmark Private School encouraged a strong interaction between faculty and parents: to reach the students, one needed to know their progenitors. Rarely a week passed that first autumn that Harry Rogers was not invited to dinner at the residence of a student. He was a favorite with all of them. The elegant blond man flirted harmlessly with the mothers, and the fathers were flattered to find someone who hung on to their every word. He made everyone feel good and his easy laugh could always lighten even the dullest of occasions without causing offense.

For obvious reasons, he was sincerely thrilled when Tommy invited him home for dinner. It was one month after the Advanced Arts class had begun and two weeks after Tommy had begun taking photographs of the Roebuck "home life." Harry had deepened his relationship with his student by spending time with him; talking, listening, sharing his increased fondness for video taped music and junk food, both of them gaining a pound or two.

It was painfully obvious that night that both father and son were on their best behavior for Harry Rogers. Tommy's usually hideous spikes of greased hair looked less jagged than expected and he wore a white shirt and a black tie. His father, while extremely bashful, did try to make small talk, although Harry was quick to note that his host gulped down

several gin and tonics before their meal and drank nearly a bottle of wine before dinner was completed. Afterwards, he consumed two more gin drinks.

Harry was delighted. The drunker Dr. Roebuck became, the easier it would be to assess what was really going on here at home — and to learn, perhaps, if the scientist really was working on a project that had agents everywhere abuzz.

Harry outdid himself, telling stories and anecdotes, causing even their nervous faces to break out into grins and then into laughs. Then after eating, when father and son gave their lively visitor a brief tour of the house and they came to the study, Harry Rogers paused in the doorway, closed his eyes in mock concentration, and said, "Aha! Here I can sense the heartbeat of the household; the secret chamber of Dr. Orville Roebuck."

This was exactly the right thing to say. His host smiled dryly and Tommy grinned, and the three of them entered the cluttered cubicle. Tommy sat down on the floor and began tracing a piece of twine in a circle. His big tabby cat, Tiger, jumped and whirled in an attempt to catch it. The men sat at the large, cluttered desk, next to pictures on the wall of Dr. Roebuck and others wildly whooping and laughing and drinking from bottles of champagne. His host explained that this was the occasion of the successful landing of *The Columbia* after its first mission.

A second photograph showed the triumphant astronauts hugging Orville Roebuck, who was surrounded by several other scholarly looking men. Harry counted them. Eleven. The Brainy Dozen. Roebuck was in the center and was making a "V" for victory sign.

"You were really young when you retired from the space program," Harry said, bluntly. The alcohol he'd drunk had loosened his tongue more than usual, but he sensed he was saying the right thing.

Orville Roebuck looked away from him and studied a row of files against the wall. His words were thick when he spoke: "True, true. Pressure's terrible. Everybody thinks you've got it made when you sit behind a desk like this and just doodle and draw things and write things down. But it takes so damned much out of your brain . . . I'm doing consulting work now. Lots easier. Money's good."

Liar, thought the guest, but he smiled and nodded his head in understanding. Tommy lay on his back with the cat stretched across his chest. The boy was either off in another world or concentrating on their conversation. It was hard to tell which. This was a dead place to grow up in, Harry thought. And no television.

An old grandfather clock in the hallway struck nine. Dr. Roebuck looked down at Tommy, as if he'd just realized he was in the room.

"Tommy, off to bed now. And

brush your teeth. And don't try reading under the quilts. You go to sleep."

Tommy looked shocked. "Dad, tomorrow's Saturday! Mr. Rogers is here! Gimme a break!"

Harry thought the man really overreacted when his face turned purple and he bellowed out: "I said go to bed! Now, move ass, son!"

The visitor was startled by this extreme change of mood, but he was joyous, too. Tommy would be a pushover. Who wouldn't want to get even with such a damned old sourpuss.

Bunching up his mouth into a furious moué, Tommy skulked out of the room. Within seconds, a door slammed somewhere down the hall. Enraged by this, the father lurched out of his chair and half staggered out of the room. "That boy's gonna get it," he slurred.

The minute he was gone, Harry Rogers went into action. He lifted the files and newspapers that lay strewn on the desk. Beneath them was a sight that both stunned and exhilarated him: blueprints of a space craft amid myriad tightly written comments and formulas. When Dr. Roebuck re-entered the room several minutes later, however, he found the teacher studying the photographs on the wall and sipping his drink. He was humming and appeared to be thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Hate to say it, Mr. Rogers," the father muttered, "but that boy of

mine is gonna be one hell of a problem someday.”

Days later, the “problem” was sitting on the edge of the teacher’s desk. The classroom was otherwise empty although signs of creative endeavor were everywhere. A clay world composed of one student’s parents, even brothers and sisters, reached toward the ceiling, and Cindy James’ ballet backdrop was propped against a wall. Metal figures and paintings were stacked or resting on available surfaces.

Tommy was guzzling a Coke and gobbling down a Snickers candy bar – courtesy of his teacher. Harry Rogers was studying the new Polaroid shots Tommy had brought in that morning: Tiger was shown jumping into the air to catch a scarlet leaf, the housekeeper sliced potatoes into a big pot on the stove, and Dr. Roebuck stood with his back to the camera. He was looking at a group of symbols he’d written on his blackboard. Harry complimented his student, and noted a quick flash of shrewdness, of cunning, flicker in the boy’s eyes. It was so unusual, so brief that Harry wondered if he had actually seen it.

“Dad didn’t hear me take this one. He likes to play his records full blast sometimes. Listens to a lot of Bach.”

Harry pretended to be interested in a pile of paper clips near his hand. “Tommy, you know you really haven’t gotten your Dad doing what

he does best. He’s supposed to be a scientist. Make him look like one.” Tommy looked at him sharply. “I mean . . . I mean, get him bending over some files, get him to spread them out on the desk. I don’t mean anything Top Secret or confidential but . . .”

“I read ‘em sometimes,” Tommy said quietly. His grin was cocky and proud. He wiped his chocolate-stained fingers on his blue jeans and threw the wrapper into the trash can.

“You . . . you what, Tommy?”

Tommy dug for a morsel of candy caught somewhere in his right cheek. “I know how to get ‘em. He hides the keys in secret places but me and Tiger, we know where they are.”

Harry shook his head and acted flabbergasted – which he was. “Tommy, I’m sorry but I simply can’t believe you. Those are top secret documents; I’m sure. No one can see those.”

The boy’s face tightened. “I’ll show you. I’ll take a picture of them and . . .”

Harry Rodgers closed his eyes tight. “No. You’ll do nothing of the kind. I’ll give you something else to do, Tommy. I thought you could handle this assignment but I really don’t think you can. You fantasize too much. Nobody can do what you just said you could do.” Harry scolded the boy – and held his breath!

The next day, Tommy came up to him after class, hands full. Harry

glanced at new Polaroid shots he'd brought in and then put them into Tommy's project file. "Very good, Tommy. They look fine. I'll look at them more closely when I have a few minutes. You know, you're making the best progress of anybody in the class."

Tommy didn't seem interested in this compliment. He was already moving toward the television set. "Can I watch *Top 40 Videos* now?"

"Of course, buddy, of course!" Harry cried. "And I'll slip you a Coke and candy bar if you promise you won't tell on me."

"It's a deal."

Harry's contact in New York, at Harry's urging, flew into Washington that night. He was dumbfounded by all that the novice agent had achieved. Among the Polaroid pictures presented to him was one that showed a metal file bearing the words: TOP SECRET. Another showed a diagram of a space vehicle. And a third was the picture of Dr. Roebuck's blackboard covered with mathematical symbols, partially blocked by his body.

The pictures didn't show much detail, yet they proved beyond a doubt that the scientist was working on something new. It was a breakthrough. Harry explained to his contact that it would be simple to get into the house and go through Dr. Roebuck's files . . . if necessary. With a little encouragement, the man's own son might help.

Tommy aimed his camera at the documents spread across the top of his father's desk, pausing to shift the lamp so that the light would reveal everything. There were drawings of a space engine, and there were specific explanations on how to get the craft into outer space. The youthful photographer pushed the button on his Polaroid. A square of glossy, thick paper slid out.

He turned and gave the photograph to his father, who stood behind him, along with two other men. One was dressed as a deliveryman and the other as a janitor. "Okay?" Tommy asked.

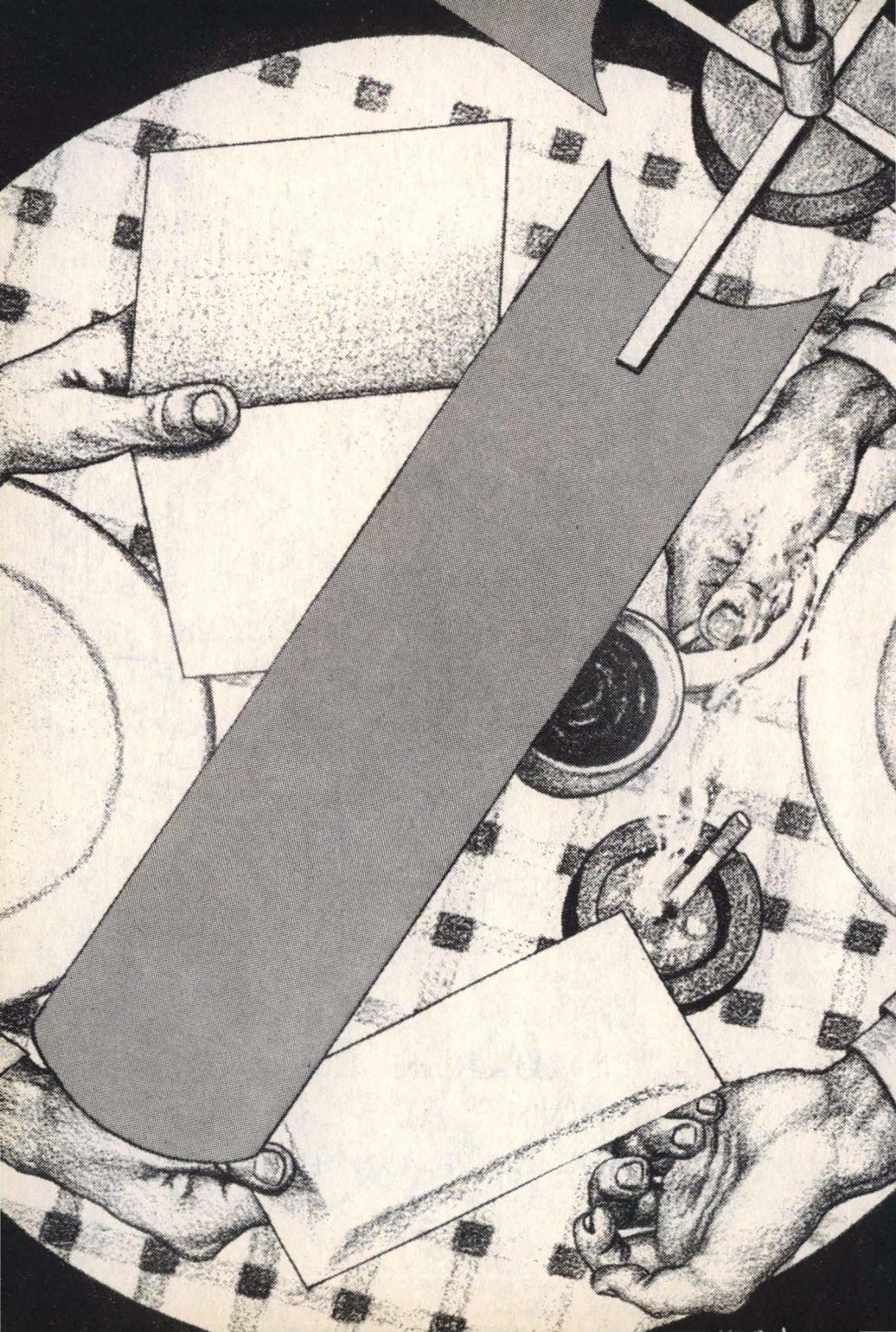
Orville Roebuck studied it for a minute. Then he smiled and stooped down to give his son a big hug. "It's great, Marlon Brando. Now go into the kitchen and check the fridge. I got you a little surprise. You've earned it."

After he left, the trio of men poured coffee and sat around the desk. The deliveryman, a husky Panamanian, pulled out a small notebook. "Harry's planning to pass this picture to Misha tomorrow night, after he gets it from Tommy. Central Park, New York. We'll be there. We'll get them both.

"Good thing you recognized Harry from Oxford, Orv, and remembered him so well. We'd never have been able to anticipate him, otherwise, and we'd have missed out on this particular little group altogether. Thanks." +



"YOU'RE IN LUCK,
I'M HAVING A SALE THIS
WEEK ... TWO SECRETS
FOR THE PRICE OF ONE."



Breakfast At

The Kawnbawza

by Isak Romun

Hal Stevens strode across the dining hall of the Kawnbawza Hotel and stopped at a table at which sat a diminutive, moist-eyed figure daintily picking at a breakfast herring.

"You did it, Travinside, you did it! All Rangoon is agog," Stevens exclaimed, wringing the diner's hand. "But how?"

Jeffrey Travinside withdrew his hand and pointed one of its fingers at his right temple, signifying that the

secret was locked in his head and would jolly well stay there. His other hand he extended, palm up, toward Stevens.

Stevens placed a fat sealed envelope in the outstretched hand. "You'll count it?"

"Do I ever?" Travinside replied, smoothly tucking the envelope away in an inner pocket of his blazer. "You know how I trust you. Besides, you Yanks seldom stint on the money. You have so much of it. Some

refreshment? I *don't* recommend the fish. It seems to have come from the murkiest depths of the Irrawaddy and still has a good bit of the murk about it."

"Coffee and toast," Stevens ordered briskly of the fezzed waiter who had silently materialized at his elbow. The waiter bowed, murmured "Sahib," and disappeared in the direction of the kitchen.

"You are amazing, Travinside," Stevens said, redirecting attention to his table companion. "We thought you had failed us. When our man at the airport saw Abel Bakerov getting on the special Moscow-bound job with that overstuffed attache case, we thought the game was up. You know what was in that case, what it could have done to us if it had gotten to the Kremlin? And then..."

"And then?" Travinside sighed, wearily, as he extracted a Service Special from a circular can placed on the table for his exclusive use by Singh, the waiter. After lighting the cigarette, he repeated, "And then?"

"And then, poof!" Stevens said. "Well, not *poof*; it wasn't an explosion, was it? *Was it?*" he asked the smiling, weary, inscrutable face of his table mate. "Okay, so don't say. No matter. Their best bomb men went over that plane before Bakerov boarded. It couldn't have been a bomb. So you tinkered with the engine. Is that it?"

"Engines puzzle me," Travinside answered. "All those wires, all those

parts, all that black stickiness. Ugh!"

"It's enough that you brought it off. Though we'd pay handsomely to know how. Just for the report, of course, and for possible future use. But not in an area where we'd be competing with you," the American hurriedly assured.

"What is handsome, Stevens?"

"Your fee, half again."

"Umm. Well, perhaps. But here's Singh with your order."

The waiter slid up to the table and, taking care not to rattle cup against saucer, placed these items before Stevens. He followed with a carafe of coffee and a plate holding two slices of lightly browned bread, each with a glistening golden surface. Singh maneuvered sugar bowl and cream jug to within Stevens' reach, then poured the coffee, after which he withdrew a short distance to await the further pleasure of either diner.

Stevens creamed and sweetened his coffee but, instead of eating right away, opted to talk further of the "accident" that had happened earlier that morning to one of Moscow's most valued agents. It had been an unusual event. The plane appeared wobbly on takeoff but managed to get into the air though it was still noticeably unstable. About fifty feet off the ground, the aircraft lost its battle with itself, turned turtle, and crashed to the concrete runway. There were no survivors, and Bakerov's hefty attache case and its

contents were effectively incinerated.

At the end of his recounting, the American addressed himself to his toast. He picked up a piece, dunked it gingerly and quickly in his coffee, and had it enroute to his mouth before his hand stopped in its passage and his nose crinkled in a quivering rosette of distaste. "Singh!" he called.

"Sahib?"

"This is oleo you have on the toast. Where's the butter? You know I have to have butter. Oleo spoils the taste of the coffee after dunking. I hate oleo!"

"Ah, sah'b Stevens," Singh mumbled placatingly, "we have no butter. Some thief in night break into kitchen and abscond with butter, only butter. We have scoured shops and the bazaar and no butter is to hand; only margarine, which we purchased."

"Phooey!" Stevens said, and in his haste to disengage himself from the offending substitute let the toast drop from his hand. It fell to the floor, margarine side down. Singh busied himself cleaning up.

Travinside had watched with interest the contretemps between American and Indian and when the toast fell, he bent down quickly, his head below the table surface, his eyes intently fixed on the fallen bread.

"So," he mused, "margarine is just as effective."

Stevens also was watching Singh removing toast and stain from the floor. "Ever notice," he reflected, "how toast always lands spread-side down when you drop it? Very messy. If it were the other side you could kiss it up to God and eat away."

"See here, Stevens," Travinside said quickly, as Singh withdrew, "I'll sell you my secret, how I destroyed that plane. There. I've taken you up on your offer now. You have to pay me even if you guess my secret."

Stevens glanced at the spot on the floor where the fallen toast had lain. "You slippery devil! Did you...?"

"Slippery is the *mot juste*. Yes, all over the top."

"Fantastic."

"Will I see you at lunch? We'll start with a *hinchon*, a rather nice clear soup with a joint of oxtail in its middle. Somewhat like a Japanese waterscape with island. Then, in memory of our departed colleague, there will be chicken kiev and a borscht which, given the circumstances of the Kawnbawza kitchen, will be as good as it should be. Cook has assured me, his store of butter will be replenished from Pegu in time for the midday meal's preparation. Do you fancy Mandalay Ale? No matter, it's the only kind they have here. Pale or dark? Food and drink are my treat."

"You say," muttered Stevens, making a mental note to bring another sealed envelope with him at noon. →

ABOUT BOOKS



"A Spy in Winter", by Michael Hastings (Macmillan Publishing Company \$14.95), satisfies. This fast-moving, fast-reading novel involves the sympathies of the reader early on, and is so consistently a whole that these sympathies never waver. The characters are well-drawn, particularly that of the "hero," Alex Orloff, a Russian-born, Western-bred agent, who is the fictional identity of the master agent who recruited, directed and controlled the Western world's most notorious traitors, including Kim Philby.

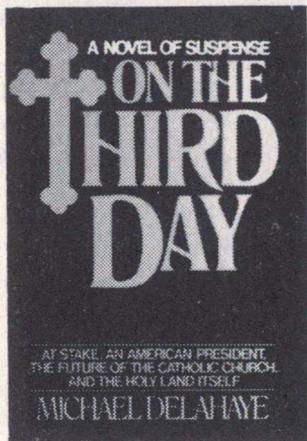
While one questions one's choice of a bad guy serving as hero, one roots for him nonetheless. I liked "A Spy in Winter",

although I have one beef with the author: Halfway through the book, I guessed that the real bad guy had to be one of two particular characters — I hate figuring out "who done it" — and that somewhat spoiled the remainder of the book for me, as I was unable to resist testing each action thereafter to gain evidence for my guess. (I was half right.) Now, others enjoy reading a novel in this way; for them, this, about which I complain, is definitely not a defect.

All in all, this is one book avid spy readers will enjoy.



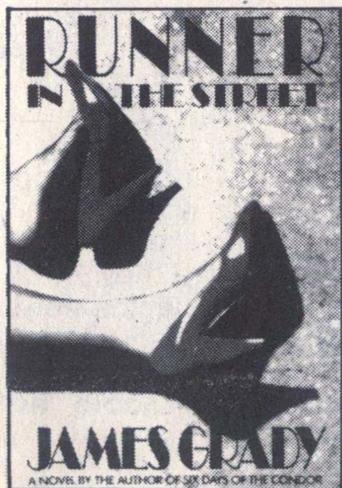
"The Cold War File", by Andy East (The Scarecrow Press, Inc. \$22.50), is a delightful resource material — not a novel — in which one finds an evaluative guide to over sixty television, movie and novel espionage series of the sixties, including information on well-known fictional spies such as George Smiley, Quiller, Matt Helm, Modesty Blaise, and a wealth of others. This book is must reading for serious students of contemporary spy thrillers.



"On The Third Day", by Michael Delahaye (Macmillan Publishing Company, \$15.95), is a novel that those readers who are interested in the "Jesus" genre should not miss. All others, take note: While the action is fast-moving, this novel is not fast-reading; there are too many loyalties involved, and quite often one must go back to check on who's who and who is with which group. And it is impossible to root for any one man or group; each of them — the CIA, the Roman Catholic Church, Israel, the Israeli spy organization, the Palestinians, the American Government — has at

least one hero and one anti-hero within its ranks. For instance, Kesler, the character most obviously deserving of the reader's sympathy, is allowed to fall by the wayside, as an important character in the novel, thereby causing the reader's emotional attachment to him to peter out into nothing. Very unsatisfactory.

Otherwise . . . the interplay of the groups, their actions, reactions and counter-actions, is fast-paced and very interest-holding. The use of minor characters as catalysts is different, and works well. Everything fits together without being overdone or becoming tedious. (It should be obvious that I would have loved this book if I could have become involved with at least one of the characters, from beginning to end — I do like Jesus-genre books!)



Then there's "Runner In The Street", a mystery by James Grady (who also wrote "Six Days of The Condor") (Macmillan Publishing Company, \$14.95). Buried somewhere within the pages of this book is a storyline, a good storyline, but one so overwhelmed by the author's need to philosophize — he pontificates on society, love, rock music, pimps, prostitutes, and drugs, among other subjects — that halfway through this novel, any mystery reader worth his salt will say "To hell with it; it's not worth the effort."

Reading this book is work, and it

shouldn't be. The idea is a good one, and the author has a wonderful way with words; he simply seems unable to make up his mind about which book he's writing: a mystery, a love story, a sociological tract on street-living. The book jacket says: "How Rankin (the book's private investigator hero) resolves the mysteries of his life — the professional and the personal — is the core of this unusual detective novel that serves up more than the standard fare." Yeah. And, mystery/detective reader that I am, I say, "Who cares?"

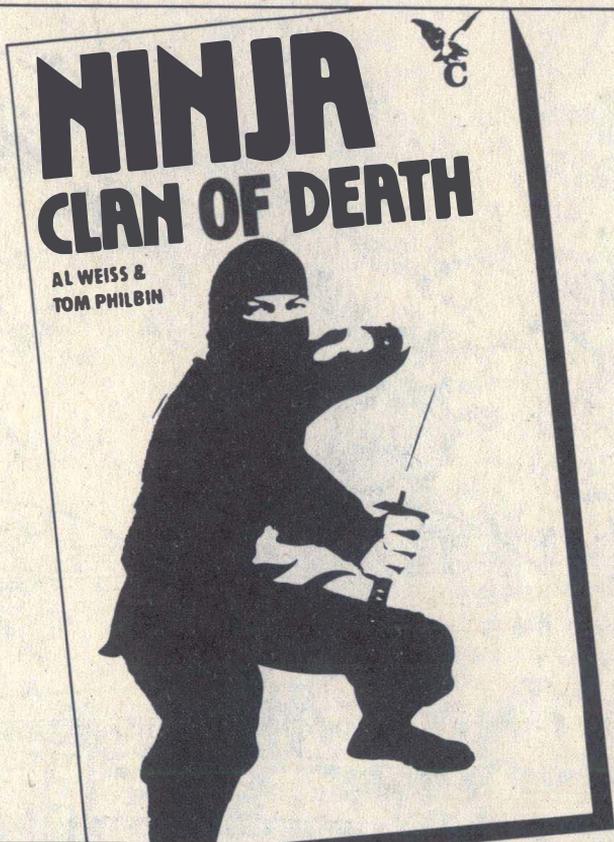


Finally, there's "Russian Spring", by Dennis Jones (Beaufort Books, Inc., \$15.95). I found this political thriller beautifully written — I'd love to read other books by Jones, he has such an enormous talent for using the language — but not my own personal cup of tea. For me, the military/political arena, in which all the action takes place, is boring. I couldn't make myself care about the details of the Soviet military action in Afghanistan, nor the maneuvers of the army officers as they vied for position both within the military organization and out among the leaders of their country.

And when I found human beings to interest me, to cause me to care about them as people, well . . . the author refused to cooperate. Too often he mired them in so much detail that I found myself wishing I could be finished with them! Finally, ultimately, and most unusually for me, I closed the book without finishing it. A peek at the last page — something I would never do if I planned to continue reading — showed me that I was right!

This book is good for the espionage reader who likes his daily war messages as they are printed in the New York Times, et al, but not for those of us who prefer to either live without the news — distressing as it always is — or who deal with it when we can have it served up to us by the reassuring voices of dulcet-toned radio announcers. This is a book for the hard-core espionage/military/political fan. I leave him/her to it.

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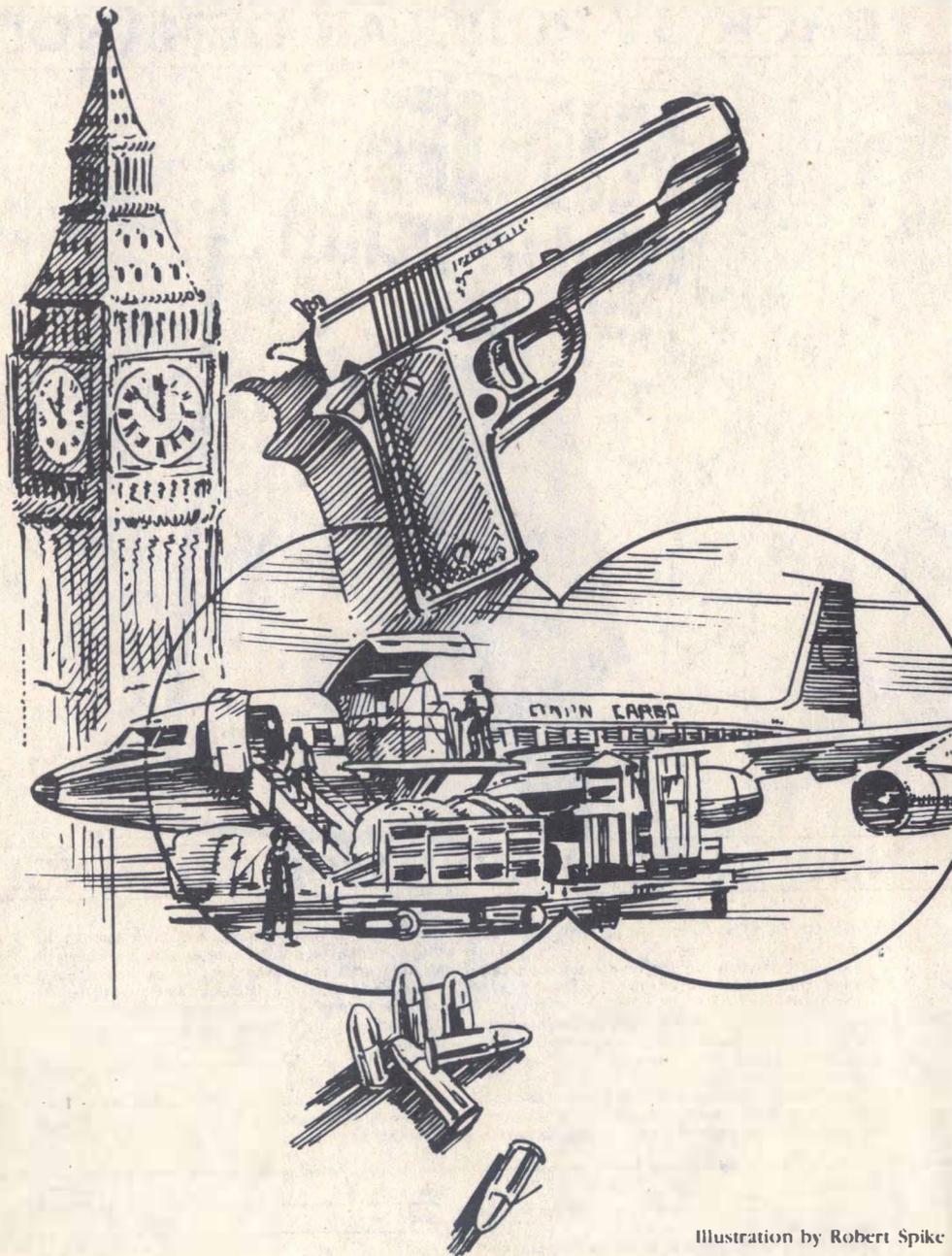


Illustration by Robert Spike

THE HATCHTREE ASSIGNMENT

by Edward D. Hoch

Charles Spacer hurried across the Liffey Bridge and walked quickly toward his hotel on Abbey Street. The afternoon sky was low and silvery gray, not unusual for Dublin in May. He'd been in the city for three days and hadn't seen the sun yet. When Colman King telephoned from London he'd asked about the weather, but Spacer had only grunted.

Now King was waiting in the lobby of his hotel, seated so his face was hidden from the door by a large potted fern. Spacer walked past him to the elevator without looking in either direction. He'd been in his sixth-floor room about five minutes when Colman King rapped gently on the door.

As he walked in, the older man motioned toward the walls and ceiling. "No bugs," Spacer assured him. "I swept it."

"Can't be too careful, even in a Dublin hotel room."

"What's on your mind, Colman?" The man from Washington never contacted him unless there was a problem — an assignment, as he liked to put it. Otherwise, Charles Spacer was the European sales manager for Conco International, a successful American electronics firm with offices in major cities of the world. At times, Spacer had trouble deciding which of his two lives was the real one and which merely a cover identity. His wife back in Oak Park, Illinois, had had the same problem. Last year, when they'd both

turned forty, she'd suggested there was little point in keeping up the charade of a marriage when his life was centered in Europe and hers was in America.

"Ever hear of the Hatchtree?" Colman King asked.

"High-capacity computer, the best there is, according to the electronics magazines. What about it?"

"As you may know, it's on the export embargo list at the State Department. It can be sold to friendly nations but not to the Soviets or Eastern Bloc countries. It could have a military application in missile launchings."

"And you think some of them are sneaking out?" Reading King's mind had never been difficult.

"Exactly. Two have been sold to a machine-tool company here in Dublin. They're the latest model — the Hatchtree 66 — with far more capacity and sophistication than such a firm could possibly need."

"When are they due here?"

"They leave Kennedy tonight on board a chartered cargo plane. It lands in Dublin at seven tomorrow morning. The Hatchtree Company is shipping to Brannister Limited in Dublin, but I'm willing to bet those computers will be loaded onto another plane right at the airport. If so, we can have them seized by Customs."

"I'll do what I can," Spacer promised. "It seems fairly routine."

"Maybe not. There could be a joker in the deck."

"Oh?"

"Brannister may be using its profits from the transshipment to purchase arms for the IRA."

Spacer nodded. "I'll watch my step. How can I reach you if needed?"

Colman King passed over an envelope. "Here's everything you need — background on the Hatchtree, including size and description of the shipping containers, my contacts here in Dublin, and a cash advance in Irish pounds to cover expenses. My contacts will hold for forty-eight hours. Then I'll be gone."

They shook hands and Colman King departed.

Brannister Limited maintained a four-story factory and offices in the northeast section of the city, near Fairview Park. It was an area where elderly row houses were gradually giving way to new developments. Charles Spacer had

seen these areas, and firms like Brannister, all his life. The only unusual thing was that Brannister had paid two-and-a-quarter million dollars into a New York bank account for some of the most highly developed computer equipment in existence today. Riding up to the top-floor offices in the rickety elevator cage, open on all sides, Spacer could agree with Colman King that there was reason for suspicion.

Only one member of the Brannister clan was still active in the business. Daniel Brannister was around fifty, with a puffy red face that hinted at too much drink, and a damp handshake that did nothing to rebuild his image. "Charles Spacer of Conco International?" he asked, studying the business card. "Have we done business with you?"

"Not yet, but I hope to remedy that," Spacer said with a smile.

"It's late in the afternoon, Mr. Spacer," he said, speaking in an accent that seemed part Irish and part English. "You caught me just as I was leaving for the day."

"If you could give me just fifteen minutes, I'd like to explain the range of electronic equipment offered by Conco. A company like this could double its output with a few computers and some automated . . ."

"No, no. We're not interested. My grandfather started this business before the Easter Rising, and we've made a go of it through three generations by following a fixed path. I've seen plenty of other firms wander off into automation and end up with unhappy workers and a declining share of the market."

"Well, Mr. Brannister, I could cite case histories which prove exactly the opposite."

But he waved the words away. "I really must go. My secretary, Miss O'Casey, can fill you in on our situation here. Maybe you've got a product for us, but I doubt it. Leave your literature with her."

Spacer shook the damp hand again and Daniel Brannister was gone. He waited in his chair for a moment and was joined by a red-haired young woman who'd been at the outside desk. "I'm Maeve O'Casey," she said extending a hand that was firmer than her employer's. "Mr. Brannister is sorry he had to run off, but perhaps I can help."

"I'm sure you can," Spacer said, giving her his best smile. "I can't believe a firm this size hasn't discovered the value of automation and computers."

Maeve O'Casey opened a file drawer and efficiently yanked out a half-dozen catalogue sheets. "These are our products, Mr. Spacer. Machine tools, plain and simple. To automate this plant would cost more than we could gross in ten years' time, and computers would be no good except for the most basic bookkeeping chores. As it is, we have a service that handles those."

Spacer stuffed the catalogue sheets into his briefcase. "Thank you, anyway. You've brightened my Dublin day a bit."

She glanced out at the leaden sky. "The weather can be a nuisance this time of year, but they're predicting sunny and warmer for tomorrow. How long are you here for?"

"Another two days." He glanced at his watch. "Look, it's almost quitting time. Could I buy you a drink or something?"

She seemed surprised. "Why would you want to do that?"

"Perhaps because Maeve is a nice name."

"A legendary Irish queen. I hate it."

"What about the drink?"

She hesitated, tilting her head slightly, and finally said "Why not?"

They went to a small pub a few blocks away, across the street from a corner park where children played. The bartender called a greeting when they entered, and it was obvious that Maeve O'Casey was a regular customer here. In the subdued lighting of the pub, her face took on a flushed, sensual look. Perhaps it was merely her after-hours appearance, away from the demands of Brannister Limited.

"Do you travel to Dublin often, Mr. Spacer?" she asked.

"Call me Charles. This is only my second trip, but I hope to be here more often in the future."

They small-talked over two pints of beer until she gave him the opening he sought. "Brannister sells its machine tools all over Europe — even behind the Iron Curtain," she told him, lighting a slim English cigarette.

"Is that so? Some firms I call on trade with Poland and Hungary. Sometimes they even buy equipment in America and resell it to Eastern Bloc countries."

"Do they indeed? Isn't that against your American regulations?"

Spacer shrugged. "Depends upon the equipment. Companies are in business to make money. Selling something behind the Iron Curtain is no worse to them than, say, selling guns to the IRA."

She suddenly stubbed out her cigarette and he realized he'd gone too far. "Did Norman Sentry send you?" she asked, the casual smile gone from her face.

"No — who the hell is Norman Sentry?"

"The best-selling British spy novelist. He lives in Dublin to avoid British taxes and he seems to think he can get the plot for his next book out of me."

"I don't know the man," Spacer answered honestly. "My business doesn't leave time for very much novel reading."

"The man is a pest at times," she said, relenting a bit by directing her anger at the absent Sentry.

"How could you possibly give him the plot for a novel?" Spacer wondered. "Do you have a secret life?"

"No, no — he was asking questions about the company. Look here, I'm sorry I was angry with you. I'm just in a bad mood today. Forgive me."

"Of course. Want another pint?"

"I'd better not." She gathered up her cigarettes and purse and got to her feet. "It's been a pleasure, Charles. The next time you're in Dublin, I hope you'll stop by the office."

"There's always tomorrow," he reminded her. "If I had your telephone number . . ."

"Tomorrow might be complicated. There's an important shipment coming in. Next time — all right?"

"Fine." He walked her to the door of the pub and watched while she hurried down the street in the direction of the Brannister building. Perhaps she was returning to the office for a bit, but he didn't bother to follow after her.

Instead, he went to the telephone booth and looked up the address of Norman Sentry.

The British author was a man in his thirties, who ushered Spacer into his flat overlooking Mountjoy Square. The place was large and quite luxurious for the neighborhood, with a few original oil paintings taking up any wall space not lined with bookcases. Spacer took in the elaborate word processor and printer on a table against one wall, and breathed in a faint sweetish odor of stale marijuana smoke.

"I don't usually see strangers on the basis of a single telephone call at dinnertime," Norman Sentry said. He was a big, bearded

man with hairy arms that showed beneath his rolled-up sleeves. The remains of his dinner, apparently eaten alone, were on a sideboard near the kitchen sink, visible from Spacer's chair in the living room.

"And I wouldn't usually bother you after business hours," Spacer assured him. "But my firm, Conco International, is most interested in breaking into the Irish computer market. I understand you've been doing research into this area for a new novel and you might be able to help me."

Sentry's eyes sparkled. "Who told you I was researching computers?"

"Someone at a firm I called on today — Brannister Limited."

"I'll give you a tip — stay away from Brannister. There's no market with them."

"Why is that?" Spacer asked innocently.

"They're interested in other things. Daniel Brannister's father was a fund-raiser for the Irish Republican Army."

"Does Daniel have IRA connections, too?"

"I wouldn't be surprised. In this country those things are in the blood."

"Does he smuggle guns for them? I suppose a machine-tool company would be a good cover."

Norman Sentry snorted. "You sound like a character from one of my novels, Mr. Spacer. How about a drink?"

"Well, maybe just one."

"Scotch?"

"Fine," Spacer hesitated, pretending embarrassment. "I hate to admit I've never read one of your books."

"You didn't miss much. But the public buys them and I have to stay out of jolly old England to keep my money from the inland revenue man. One thing about Ireland — they're very good to writers here."

"So I've heard."

Norman Sentry handed him a glass of Scotch. "So tell me — what did you really come to see me for?"

"I . . ."

"I don't deal in drugs. If someone told you that, they're a liar."

Then what do you deal in? Spacer wondered. *Something besides the printed word, obviously. Perhaps the spoken word.*

"I was told you had information."

"Research?"

"That's right, research. I'd like to pay for some research material."

The Englishman scratched his beard and squinted at him. "On what subject?"

"Hatchtree."

"Well, well — you're in the big leagues, aren't you?"

"No, I simply . . ."

"I know. Look, come back tomorrow evening at this time. I might have something for you."

"How much will it cost me?"

"We'll talk about that after I see what I can get for you. Maybe there'll be nothing. Tomorrow's going to be a busy day."

"So I've heard," Spacer murmured.

In the morning he was up early, just after dawn. He drove his little rented car to the airport, parking in the lot designated for the air cargo terminal. It was some distance from the main passenger terminal, and at this time of the morning there were few cars. Spacer was cautious, hoping not to be seen or recognized by Brannister or his secretary if they put in an appearance.

A big cargo plane touched down a few minutes after seven o'clock and taxied toward Spacer's observation point. Almost at once, he saw Daniel Brannister emerge from a hanger and walk forward to the point where one of the ground crew was motioning the plane to a stop. Soon the pilot and crew emerged from the plane, and through his binoculars Spacer could see some sort of disagreement in progress. All was not going as planned. The pilot walked away and Brannister seemed to be ordering the big plane's cargo hatch opened.

Charles Spacer moved quickly through the cargo terminal, waiting near the door of the customs section through which he knew they all must emerge. The pilot and his blond navigator came out, and then before Spacer realized what was happening he was face to face with Daniel Brannister.

"What . . . what are you doing here?"

"Conco has some air cargo arriving this morning," he said calmly. "Should be in any minute now. You, too?"

"I don't know what I have, except a pack of idiots in my employ!" He shouted at the back of the departing pilot. "Roger,

just hold it there a minute! The shipment is not on board your aircraft! Your co-pilot, LeRoy, said to see you.”

The pilot, Roger, turned with some exasperation and said, “I told you that when we landed. The cargo was off-loaded at Shannon exactly as your office instructed. I have the radio message in my log.”

“I’d like to see that,” Brannister said, his lips thin and angry. He seemed to have forgotten Spacer’s presence. His eyes went to the message Roger indicated. “I never sent that,” he growled. “I never directed you to off-load the shipment at Shannon Airport. Who picked it up there?”

“How should I know? I only fly the plane.” He turned to Spacer. “You work for Brannister?”

“No, I’m Charles Spacer . . . ”

“. . . from Conco International. Spacer, this is my pilot, Roger Haines.” He glanced around for the rest of the crew. “What happened to Morgan and LeRoy?”

“They’ll be waiting for me outside,” Roger Haines said. “Look the goods were left at Shannon Airport. Don’t give me any grief, Brannister. I limped in here with fuel tanks that were practically empty. As soon as we get a little rest and my tanks are full, the three of us are heading back to the States.”

“If you had nothing to deliver,” Spacer asked, “why did you come on to Dublin at all?”

“To collect my money and pick up a cargo for the States. We don’t fly these things empty, you know.”

“I’ll get to the bottom of this,” Brannister promised. “Come to my office after lunch.” The pilot nodded and went off to meet his two crewmen.

“Valuable cargo?” Spacer asked.

“Damned valuable. I don’t know what’s going on here.”

Spacer didn’t know, either. Colman King had asked him to verify the arrival and transshipment of two Hatchtree 66 computers, but as near as he could tell they’d been dropped at Shannon Airport. Were they on their way to Russia, or did the IRA have some use for them? And was Brannister merely an innocent bystander?

The area around Mountjoy Square was alive with activity at mid-morning. Spacer slipped into the building, thankful there was no doorman, and took the elevator to Sentry’s

floor. "Who is it?" the bearded man asked, opening the door just a crack in response to his ring.

"Charles Spacer. Hope I'm not disturbing you."

"I told you to come tonight."

"It's got to be now. Something's come up."

Norman Sentry's head disappeared from the opening and Spacer wondered if he had a woman with him. He thought of Maeve O'Casey at once. Then Sentry said, "Very well," and opened the door.

Spacer entered and looked around. The bedroom door was closed. "I'm sorry to intrude on you like this . . ."

"Get to the point, Mr. Spacer."

"Do you have the information for me?"

"About Hatchtree, you mean?"

"Yes."

"It'll cost you 10,000 pounds. British, not Irish."

"How do I know you have anything to sell?"

"I have it."

"Then the money can be arranged."

"The money first."

Spacer smiled, moving casually about the room. "We seem to be in a deadlock. Why don't I suggest a possible compromise?" Now he was opposite the closed bedroom door. "Tell me what you know first and I'll promise not to reveal your source."

"How do you know my . . .?"

Spacer reached over suddenly and opened the bedroom door. "You can come out now, Miss O'Casey."

But it wasn't Maeve O'Casey behind the door. It was Morgan, the blond navigator from the airport, and he had a small Beretta automatic aimed at Spacer's chest.

Norman Sentry chuckled at the surprised look on Spacer's face as he raised his hands and walked backward toward the sofa, directed by the motions of the gun in Morgan's hand. "Was that your trump card, Mr. Spacer? If so, you just overplayed your hand."

"Seems like it," Spacer admitted, sitting down hard.

"What are you, CIA or something?"

"Just a businessman trying to make an honest buck. A little industrial espionage never hurt anyone."

"If that's your fall-back cover story, it's not a very good one."

"What should we do with him?" Morgan asked, holding the

gun steady.

"I'd like to drop him in the Liffey with no questions asked. But if he is working for the American government that could cause us more trouble than it's worth. Let's tie him to that kitchen chair and leave him here."

"What about our deal?" Spacer asked, as they led him to the chair.

"You came too soon," Sentry answered. "And you got too nosy."

Spacer's hands and feet were tied to the wooden chair and a gag was placed in his mouth. "What do we do with him after?" Morgan wanted to know.

"When it's over we'll release him," Sentry said. "Come on."

They went out the apartment door, leaving Spacer alone to contemplate his misfortune. Something was happening today, and he had not an inkling of what it was. Had Morgan, the navigator, faked the radio message directing Haines to land at Shannon and unload the Hatchtree computers there? Were they already on their way behind the Iron Curtain? He strained at the ropes around his wrists but they held firm.

He must have been there an hour when he heard a key turn in the lock. The door opened slowly inward and his eyes widened as he saw Maeve O'Casey slip into the apartment. He hadn't been completely wrong in his guesswork, only premature.

She didn't seem surprised to find him tied to the chair, and quickly removed the gag from his mouth and set to work on the ropes. "I was hoping they hadn't killed you," she told him. "It was my fault for mentioning Norman to you in the first place."

"How'd you get the key?"

"He gave me one when he was trying to romance me. When you mentioned selling guns to the IRA, it triggered Norman Sentry in my mind. That's not his real name, of course — it's a pseudonym he uses for his books. And he's not English, he's Irish. That's his closely guarded secret. The money from his best-selling novels goes to finance the IRA. Was Morgan with him — the navigator from the plane?"

"Yes," Spacer confirmed. She'd finally finished untying the knots and he yanked his hands free of the ropes, bending over to help untie his feet.

"The plane is carrying weapons for IRA terrorists. When it leaves Dublin, Morgan will force Haines to fly it to Northern

Ireland instead of back home to America.”

“What about LeRoy, the co-pilot?”

“Things have taken a nasty turn. LeRoy was killed an hour ago by a hit-and-run driver. I’m sure they’ll replace him with an IRA member who can fly the plane while Morgan overpowers Roger Haines.”

“Why didn’t they unload the weapons here?”

“The Irish government forbids direct aid to the IRA. An Irish customs agent might wink at the contents of the plane as long as it stays on board, but he couldn’t allow it to be unloaded here.”

“And the Hatchtree computers?”

“You know a great deal, don’t you, Mr. Spacer?”

He smiled at her. “I told you to call me Charles. I know the plane was carrying two Hatchtrees bound for Brannister Limited. It seemed more than was needed for a little machine-tool business.”

“Daniel Brannister has always felt guilty for not being the man his father was. One of his customers, a Bulgarian businessman, approached him about buying two Hatchtrees, since the Bulgarian couldn’t purchase them directly. There was a nice fee involved, and Daniel thought it could be his small contribution to the IRA cause.”

“Where are the Hatchtrees now?”

“Your guess is as good as mine. In the air cargo building at Shannon Airport, over a hundred miles from here, I suppose.”

“If Daniel Brannister didn’t send the radio message to land at Shannon, who did?”

“I have no idea. I suppose Morgan might have faked it, or perhaps Norman Sentry managed to send it.”

“For what reason?”

“You’re the most obvious reason, Charles. You were snooping around yesterday, talking to Daniel and me, and even to Norman Sentry. Did you mention the Hatchtree to Norman?”

“Yes,” he admitted.

“Then there’s your answer. He feared you’d have customs seize the plane for those computers. In getting the Hatchtrees, they’d have been unable to overlook the weapons destined for the IRA. So Norman contacted Morgan on the plane with that fake message. With the Hatchtrees unloaded at Shannon, they could proceed with their original plan to fly the arms to Northern Ireland.”

He admitted it made sense. Sentry would have given him some

information that evening and earned another 10,000 pounds for the cause. It made sense, and yet . . . ”

“I have to get to the airport,” he decided. “That’s where Sentry and Morgan will be.”

But the first person he saw, as he entered the air cargo building with Maeve at his side, was Daniel Brannister. “I’ve talked to Shannon Airport three times,” he growled. “They can’t find any record of my shipment being unloaded last night or this morning.”

Spacer hurried forward, leaving Maeve to deal with him. There was no way of knowing how soon Haines and his crew would be taking off, but he felt he had not a moment to lose.

He saw the cargo plane still at the hanger where it had landed that morning. The crew was boarding it — Haines and Morgan and a new co-pilot he didn’t know. He started toward them, but almost at once Norman Sentry appeared to block his path.

“I didn’t think we’d be seeing you again; not this soon.”

“I’m getting on that plane,” Spacer told him. Sentry merely smiled. “No, you’re not.”

Spacer’s right fist connected with Norman Sentry’s jaw and the novelist staggered backward. He twisted and fell to the ground, and as he started to rise Spacer hit him again. This time he stayed down.

Spacer hurried up the steps and entered the plane. “What in hell do you want?” Morgan asked, but made no move to stop him.

“Where’s the cargo?” Spacer asked, but already he’d found the door on his own and entered the cargo bay. Several large cases labeled *Farm Machinery* were clustered in the area over the wings, strapped into position. Spacer grabbed a crowbar and pried away one slat.

“What’s going on here?” the pilot Haines asked, hurrying back from the cockpit. “We’re set to take off.”

“These are weapons for the IRA,” Spacer told him. “Morgan and your new co-pilot are planning to kill you and fly the plane to Northern Ireland.”

All three men were back there now, facing him. “We warned you to stay out of this,” Morgan said.

The co-pilot, a swarthy man with dark eyes, slipped a pistol from under his flying jacket. “Haines, look out!” Spacer warned.

But Haines never changed his expression. The co-pilot turned and shot Morgan through the right temple.

Haines glanced down at his fallen navigator. "Give me the gun, Pierre. I'll cover him while you get this plane onto the runway."

Pierre shifted the gun toward Spacer. "I kill him, too. Why not?"

"Because I say so. I want to find out what he knows."

"It's all becoming clear," Spacer said. "You had your co-pilot killed so Pierre could take his place. The plot was against Morgan and the IRA."

Roger Haines leveled the gun at Spacer as Pierre switched on the jet engines. "You think I can bother running Sten guns and plastic explosives when there's two-and-a-quarter million dollars in computers on board?"

"Of course," Spacer said. "They were always on board, weren't they? In those big crates that are supposed to contain the IRA weapons. You never unloaded the computers at Shannon because you never even landed at Shannon."

"You know that?"

"I know it. You said you were almost out of fuel when you landed here. But surely you would have refueled at Shannon before flying those last hundred or so miles on a nearly empty tank. Besides, Brannister's been calling Shannon and they have no record of the shipment. The Hatchtrees are right there behind me, with a few weapons inside the crates to fool the customs men. You knew they'd wink at the guns but they'd stick to the rules on the Hatchtrees."

"You're a smart guy," Haines told him. "How'd you get in on this, anyway?"

The plane was rolling now, taxiing onto the runway. "We suspected Brannister of transshipping the Hatchtrees to an Eastern Bloc country."

"Sure, he was going to do it. But why make a few hundred thousand for the IRA when I can take the computers myself and sell them to the Russians for the full two-and-a-quarter million?"

"Then this plane . . . ?"

". . . is flying east, not west. I'm delivering the goods in person. They supplied Pierre to help me, and he got rid of LeRoy."

"You'll never make it."

"You think not? By the time anyone realizes what's happening we'll be in East German airspace."

"You can never go back to America."

"With that much money, who cares. All these complicated transshipment deals with faked invoices! All you do is get in a plane and fly the stuff over."

"The East Germans will shoot you out of the sky."

Haines shook his head. "They know we're coming."

"Those Hatchtrees can be used to guide ICBMs."

"Don't go patriotic on me, mister."

Pierre called out from the cabin. "Cleared for takeoff!"

"I'll be right there," Haines said, raising the gun to take aim.

"I hope you're a better shot than Pierre was," Spacer said.

"Morgan is still alive."

Haines only glanced down for a second, but that plus the motion of the plane was all that Charles Spacer needed.

Colman King shook his head and stared at the inside of the plane. "Did you kill this one, too, Charles?"

"That's Morgan, the navigator. Pierre shot him as soon as I came on board. He was IRA and believed those crates were full of weapons. He also knew the plane had never landed at Shannon Airport, but he thought the Hatchtrees were still back in New York. They had to kill him before they set a course for East Germany."

"What about the other two?"

"They're not bad off. Haines and Pierre should both live to tell their stories."

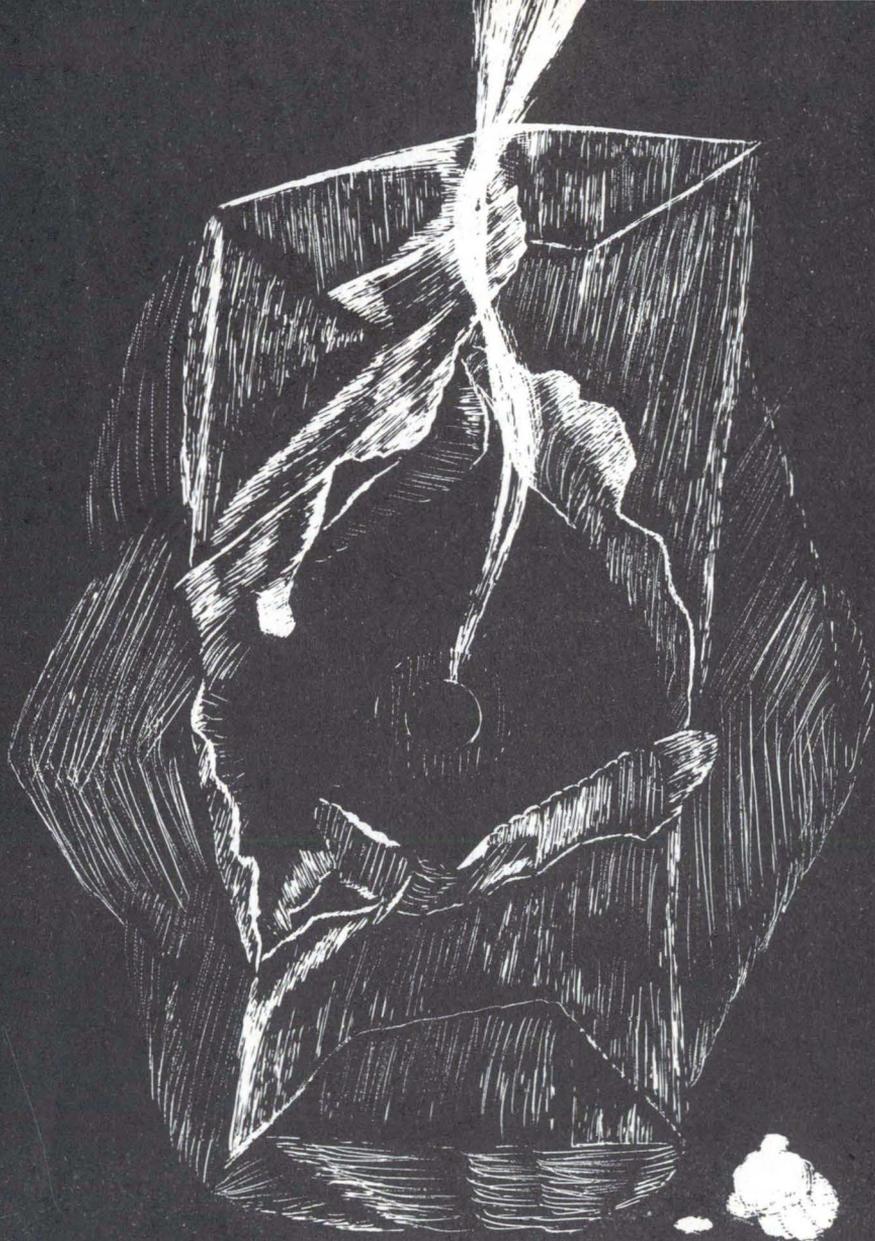
"I hope so. Now where are the Hatchtrees?"

Spacer pried off a few more boards from the packing cases. He tossed out two well-oiled submachine guns and then tore away more packing material. "Right here, all the time. Haines dreamed up the gun-running cover story so he could play the IRA against Brannister and fly the computers to East Germany himself. There never was a radio message to land at Shannon, of course. Morgan went along with it because he thought Haines was on their side."

Colman King nodded. "Thanks, Charles. I didn't realize it would be quite so dangerous."

"When money's involved, it's always dangerous," Spacer said.

He left the plane and walked back toward the air cargo building. It was growing dark and he wondered if Maeve O'Casey had waited for him. +



THE KNACK

by Percy Spurlark Parker

The broad's neck snapped like dried straw. It was a simple matter of going over to the bed, slapping one hand over her mouth, the other on the back of her head, then pulling and twisting. I could've done a dozen more without getting tired.

I went over and cracked the door, listened. The only sound I heard was the tick of the grandfather clock at the end of the hall. Her robe was draped across the chair at the side of her bed. I slipped it on her, found her house shoes.

Her night cap fell off when I picked her up, exposing stringy gray hair wrapped in foam rollers. Some women really get uptight about being seen in public with their hair in rollers. Just in case she'd been that type, and so everything would look right, I took the time to put the cap back on, then I carried her out into the hall. Even in dead weight, she didn't feel any heavier than a twelve pack. I got my hands under her arms, stood her at the head of the stairs and let go.

As arranged, I met Cliff in the park at noon the next day. I was sitting on the bench by the lagoon, watching some old man throw popcorn to the pigeons. There was a big gray one in particular who seemed to be getting most of it. I wondered how fast they would gobble it up if I could've dumped some rat poison into the old man's bag. I could see the big, gray one try taking to the air and doing a nose dive into the lagoon. Or maybe the whole bunch would be flying somewhere when the poison took effect. Talk about raining cats and dogs. It was something I'd have to try one day soon.

Cliff plopped on the bench next to me. We were both the same age but he looked much older with his dark heavy beard.

"Well?" he said, and I handed him the newspaper

clippings.

I'd cut the top one out this morning. It had been stuck in the corner of the obituary page and told in brief detail of the death of a nursing home resident who'd fallen down the stairs during the night. There were three other clippings; a hit and run attributed to some kids joyriding in a stolen car, a boating accident, and a suicide.

"You've done very well."

"I have a knack for it."

"Indeed you do. You've taken care of their north-east sleeper wing single-handedly."

"That's the way the orders were cut," I said, noticing a slight hesitancy in Cliff's usual clip delivery. "You sound like you didn't expect me to complete the job."

"No, on the contrary, I was the only one at the agency who felt you would."

"What kind of game are we playing now?"

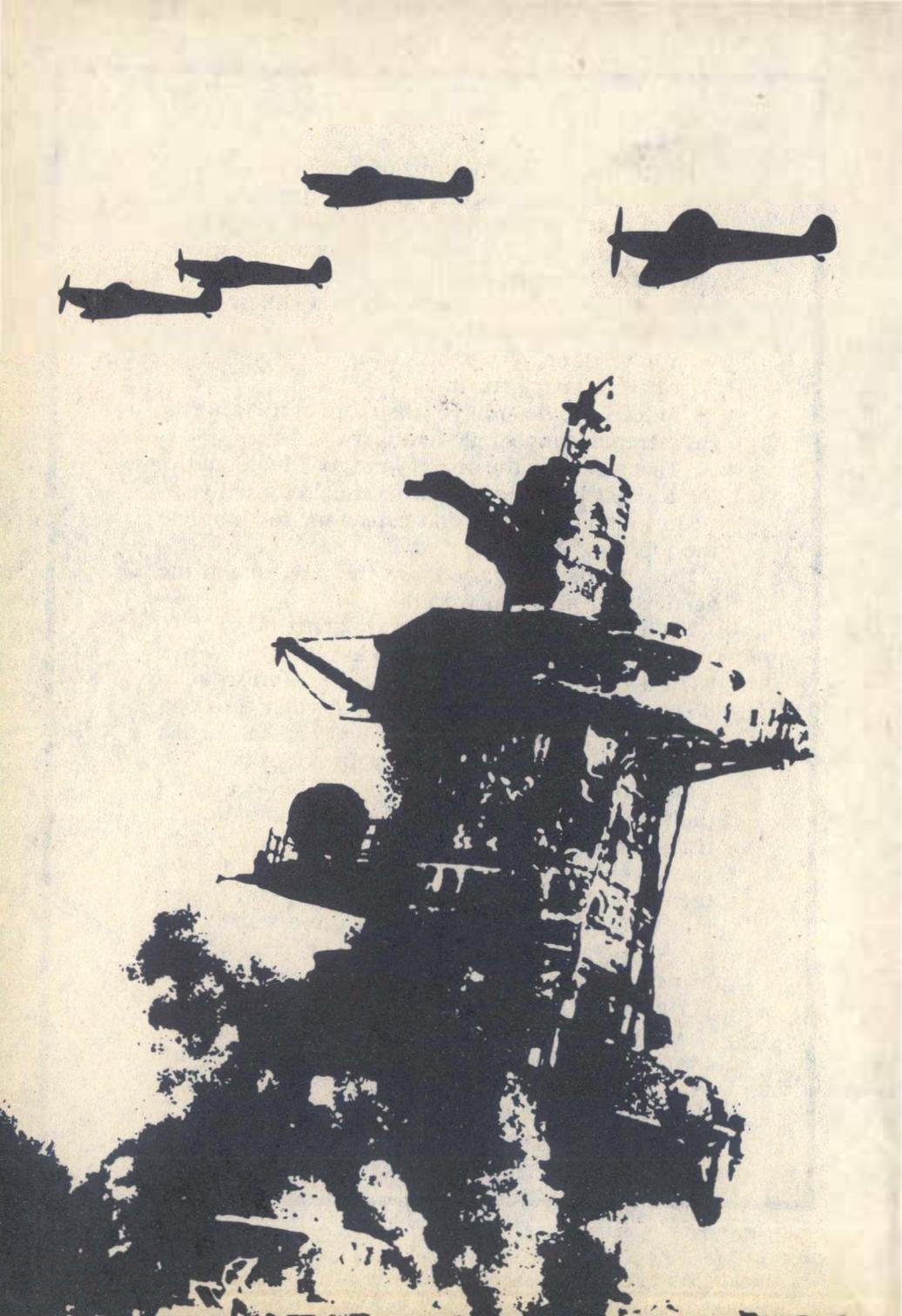
"No games," Cliff said, looking directly at me. "The agency needs dedicated people who strive to do a complete, thorough job. It's when those attributes are perverted into an obsessive pleasure that we have to initiate more stringent controls."

It was the old desk jockey jabber. They get out of the field and they get soft. Now they wanted to get rid of me for doing my job too well. I'd never come close to how good I could really be, but I'd show them, and I'd enjoy it all the way. Four stiff fingers into Cliff's throat would make a good start.

Just for a second, Cliff's eyes flickered and he glanced to his left. I swung around, digging for the .45 in my belt.

The old man was less than ten feet away, his hand deep in the popcorn bag. I gripped the butt of my .45 but the bag burst with a spray of popcorn and the golden flame of a silenced revolver.

The old man was good, too. +





THE INTELLIGENCE PROCESS

by Ernest Volkman

It ain't what a man
doesn't know that makes
him a fool, but what he
knows that ain't so. —
Josh Billings

United States Army Lieutenant Leslie A. Skinner was not an especially popular man with most of his neighbors on the Army's Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland during 1934. For one thing, there was the matter of all that banging and clanging which rang out each night from the basement workshop of the young ordinance officer's home. Worse, each Sunday morning — a sanctified non-duty day of rest for most military personnel — the quiet was shattered by loud explosions as Skinner would take whatever strange contraption he was building in his basement out to an empty post firing range for testing.

Nobody seemed to know quite what Skinner was tinkering with, and the man himself, a notoriously taciturn loner, did not encourage questions. Possibly, it was some of the Aberdeen gossip about Skinner's contraption that moved a member of a visiting German military delegation to Aberdeen one Sunday morning in the fall of that year to wander over toward a firing range. There, he saw Skinner loading what appeared to be a small bomb with rocket-like fins onto a long rail.

The German Wehrmacht officer tried to start up a conversation with Skinner, but he had no sooner mentioned the word "rocket" when Skinner packed up his equipment and stalked off. Nonplussed, the German officer stood at the spot for

a full minute, shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

At first glance, this seems an odd way to begin a discussion of the craft of intelligence, and yet there is much to heed in this obscure little incident 50 years ago on a Depression-era Army post. For what happened there that Sunday morning ultimately amounted to an intelligence failure that was to cost a number of lives and have a direct impact on the course of World War II.

The failure in this case falls directly on the shoulders of the German officer. We do not know his name, for there is no record that he later filed any report on what he had seen and heard at Aberdeen that day. A curious oversight, for the officer, attached to the German military attache office in the Washington embassy, was, presumably, a functioning intelligence officer, as were (and still are) all military attaches. Nevertheless, he apparently never bothered to record the fact that an American Army officer was testing a military rocket. Given the size of the rocket the German officer observed, not too much effort would have been required to deduce that it was some sort of anti-tank rocket, a further clue being the fins (which meant that the rocket was designed for stabilized flight). Subsequently, there is no record that the Germans ever tried

to discover the extent of American rocket development, nor, even more to the point, was there any attempt to discover if any American rocket might pose a threat to the armadas of tanks Germany was then starting to build as the backbone of its new army.

Eight years later, in North Africa, Germans paid dearly for that oversight when they encountered a nasty technological surprise: an American shoulder-fired, anti-tank rocket, invented by Skinner and nicknamed "bazooka" by GIs, that blew the turrets off German Panzers. (One entire detachment of German tanks surrendered after being fired on from long range by bazookas; the detachment commander thought he had been zeroed in by artillery.) Skinner's invention had come back to haunt the Germans, who finally managed to capture one bazooka intact. They simply copied the weapon with a few refinements, renamed it Panzerfaust, and crash-produced thousands in a desperate attempt to stem the tide of Allied armor.*

But it was too late; Skinner had provided the foot soldier with an

equalizer to the feared German tanks that had terrorized infantry for years all over Europe. For the Germans, the intelligence failure was double-edged: not only did the bazooka threaten Germany's own tanks, but since the Wehrmacht had no anti-tank rockets of its own, that meant any new tank design with upgraded armor which could withstand German anti-tank artillery would have a great advantage. And that is precisely what happened, even before the advent of Skinner's bazooka. In July 1941, units of General Heinz Guderian's Second Panzer Army, spearheading the German thrust into Russia, frantically reported attacks by a new Russian tank they had never seen before, an extremely mobile machine whose sloped armor seemed impervious to the best German anti-tank shells (one Russian tank required 13 shell hits before being knocked out of action). The Germans had encountered, for the first time, the famed T-34 tank, whose superior mobility and armor were years ahead of any existing tank design. Only the Russians' inability to use their wonder tanks properly in massed

*Some 40 years after the bazooka's sensational debut in North America, the U.S. Army had developed the latest generation successor to Skinner's original design. Called Viper, it was plagued by such severe technical problems that Congress

ordered the Army to consider buying superior foreign anti-tank rockets — among them, ironically, West Germany's Panzerfaust III, linear descendant of the World War II copy.



formations prevented a greater German disaster, although when the Russians finally did learn how to manage armored warfare, it was the T-34 which spearheaded the final drive that ended in the streets of Berlin. (Guderian only half-jokingly proposed at one point that the Germans simply reproduce the T-34 design exactly, paint swastikas on them and send "German T-34s" into battle. This suggestion was immediately rejected by a humorless high command, which noted the loss of face the supposedly mighty German war machine would suffer were it to copy a tank design from the "subhuman" Russians.)

In the larger context of World War II, and its many intelligence failures, the bazooka incident is virtually unknown. Yet, it offers a vital clue to the intelligence process, because that process, fundamentally, concerns human perceptions and human judgments. And that explains why there are still continuing failures in intelligence, despite increasingly elaborate technical collection systems.

The Germans were surprised by the appearance of the American bazooka, despite the fact that its inventor had inadvertently demonstrated the weapon right under the German intelligence officer's nose. Why? Possibly, the intelligence officer was lazy or incompetent, but a more likely explanation is that he

represented a cultural mindset that, proud of its traditional scientific and technological mastery, refused to consider even the possibility of any other nation developing superior technology, especially military technology. He did not see because he was conditioned not to see.

This phenomenon is even more obvious in the case of the T-34 tank: the Germans were completely surprised by the appearance of this tank, despite the fact that the Russians had not taken too many pains to hide it. The German Army's 1941 tank recognition manual contained no mention of the T-34, although the Russians had first used the tank more than a year before during border clashes in the Far East with Japan, a close German ally. But German intelligence refused to believe that the Russians, whom they considered technological Neanderthals, could possibly build a tank superior to those produced by the vaunted German technology. This myopia persisted even in the face of more direct evidence: in May, 1941, the Russians showed off their Stalin Tank School near Moscow to American news reporters. *Life* magazine published pictures of the school, including shots clearly showing the new T-34s, which first entered large-scale production in 1940. This uncharacteristic openness by the Russians, allowing a rare peek inside their military establishment, was in-

tended as a warning to the Germans of the power of the Red Army. It was a none-too-subtle hint that failed completely. German intelligence persisted in its belief that no such advanced design as the T-34 could possibly exist, and a month later, the Germans invaded the Soviet Union and soon encountered the "non-existent" tank.

It was tempting to believe that the German blindness was a symptom of totalitarian societies in general, where rigidly-enforced belief systems tend to spawn narrow thinking imposed from above, or no thinking at all. But the fact is that democracies, including the United States, are just as subject to horrendous intelligence failures. Indeed, it is possible to recite a history of American intelligence solely in terms of a long litany of failure, ranging from Pearl Harbor to Vietnam. That would be an oversimplification, yet the truth remains: every American president, from Wilson to the present day, has experienced at least one major foreign policy disaster that was directly attributable to either a lack of adequate intelligence or an outright failure to understand the intelligence at hand.

To understand how that has come about, a few words about the intelligence process itself are in order.

To begin with, it is important to remember that there is a difference between information and intelligence, which can be broadly

defined as processed information. The process is roughly similar to the one that goes on each day inside newspaper offices — a large amount of information flows in, there to be digested, analyzed and processed into a package that the editors believe is a reasonably complete report on the important events of the day. In intelligence, the same process is often called "intellection," meaning the processing of information (sometimes termed "raw intelligence") into judgments. These judgments are given to policymakers (called "customers" or "users" in intelligence jargon), who are then supposed to make decisions based on them.

The vast bulk of any intelligence service's input comes from so-called "open" sources — publications, radio broadcasts, and a thousand and one other such clues. Suppose, for example, that country X is fearful of imminent attack from country Y. Thus, country X is watching Y's armed forces very carefully. Its intelligence service discovers, by the simple expedient of having its field agents keep their eyes open, that large numbers of country Y's high-ranking military officers are on leave. Cross-checked against other sources — is this possibly a deliberate deception? — X will conclude that war with Y is not imminent, since if it were, Y's military forces would be in a more heightened state of alert, with military

leaves cancelled.

The tricky part is the intellection process itself, which is most often afflicted by the biases of the people who make the judgments, the predeliction of the "customers," and sometimes the sheer inability of intelligence analysts to make judgments because of lack of information. In the latter case, the judgments become hedged and indefinite, which induces either overcaution or simply wrongheaded conclusions. Ideally, intelligence should amount to the formula once summarized by Lieutenant General Samuel V. Wilson, former deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency: "We can't tell you what God is going to do on Tuesday of next week. But we probably can tell you when He's getting mad."

Which is to say that there is rarely an intelligence agency's conclusion that is precise in all details, unless there is an unparalleled, unimpeachable source. (Even ULTRA, the great British code-breaking operation of World War II that managed to read virtually all of the German high command's radio signals, was not an intelligence paragon. It could only read the German decisions and orders that were dispatched in radio form. It could not detect verbal orders, nor could it detect information sent by telephone over secure land lines. And, most importantly, it could not see inside the heads of Germany's military leadership.)

Among many Americans, there is a persistent conviction that there is something called "intelligence," by which is meant an empirical truth lying out there someplace, waiting to be detected. This conviction stems, in part, from a peculiar bias of American culture, which is dominated by an ethos that most, if not all, problems are soluble by systems. For that reason, modern American intelligence tends to distrust raw intelligence produced by human beings (called "humint" in American intelligence slang), the traditional cloak and dagger spy. Instead, the sprawling U.S. intelligence apparatus, which now includes about 150,000 people and spends more than \$15 billion a year, concentrates its efforts on complicated technological systems to collect raw intelligence, leaving human beings the task of interpreting the meaning of the huge amounts of data collected. There are two basic sources of American intelligence. One is signal intelligence (known as "sigint"), which collects electronic transmissions, including radar, missile and satellite telemetry, coded signals, telephone transmissions, microwave beams and computer signals. The second is photo intelligence (called "photint"), which involves taking photographs or television pictures of targets of intelligence interest from overhead, mostly by satellite. Slightly less than 20 percent of all American intelligence is collected

by human sources, the bulk of them CIA agents attached to embassies abroad and military intelligence personnel.

The theory is that the more intelligence produced by machine, the least likely it is to be subject to fallacies of human error. However, the best technology of modern American intelligence is as subject to human error as all intelligence always has been. The problem is twofold: first, the human beings who interpret the supposedly immutable "facts" produced by technical collection systems are just that, human. What a satellite picture might mean is subject to a whole range of human biases, most importantly political ones. Second, there is no intelligence system, even the massive American apparatus, that collects everything. What it collects is determined by a system of collection priorities, which in turn immediately involves questions of bias, since human beings decide what is important to collect, and what is not. For example, a number of experts in 1972 tried to convince the CIA to pay attention to the growing power of the petroleum exporting countries and the possible implications of American foreign policy. Their arguments went unheeded, and the 1973 OPEC oil boycott came as a complete shock, catching the United States totally unprepared.

Another popular belief about American intelligence is that there

is some sort of correlation between quantity and quality of intelligence; the greater the amount of raw intelligence collected, the more likely that the "truth" will be unearthed. Again, this is a peculiarly American bias, for in a country where the microcircuit and the resulting information explosion were born, there is a prevailing faith that much intelligence work is a simple function of collection. For that reason, intelligence officials in the United States take great delight in recounting the wonders of their technical collection systems: how their spy satellites can spot golf balls lying on the grass from thousands of miles in space, or how new television reconnaissance devices can spot people walking on the streets of Moscow from satellites hundreds of miles above their heads.

But quantity is no guarantee of anything, save quantity; the most detailed raw intelligence is only a pile of filmstrips and paper unless there is somebody around who can understand what it all means. Modern history is instructive in this regard: the truth is that error is the most commonplace feature of all modern intelligence, American included. Indeed, it is interesting how often colossal blunders and gross miscalculations recur with distressing regularity, despite truly awesome tools of modern technology. The development is even more remarkable, considering the



fact that intelligence enjoys something of a vogue in contemporary politics. An ingrained part of all modern statecraft, intelligence is now devoid of the old onus connected with espionage and is even officially enshrined in diplomatic agreements, witness the American-Soviet arms limitation agreements that include provisions (called "national technical means" in diplomatese) guaranteeing each nation unimpeded spy satellite overflights. To a great extent, intelligence has become institutionalized, outfitted with assorted bureaucratic trappings to make it somewhat respectable — a development that would be unrecognizable to the old cloak and dagger generation. That generation would also have trouble recognizing the transformation of the spy into its modern version, "intelligence officer." (The word "spy" is gradually disappearing from the modern political lexicon.)

Yet, despite all this, it seems that the more we collect, the less we seem to know about what's really going on. The chief reason is that intelligence has been outrun by technology; American intelligence, especially, is flooded by the mountains of data they so assiduously collect. That means the humans who are supposed to be interpreting this ocean of material are often overwhelmed. Moreover, the tail is wagging the dog: an increasing percentage of human resources is expended

in collection, rather than analysis. Or, as Lady Astor was reputed to have said during that fateful night aboard the Titanic, "I asked for a glass of ice water, but this is ridiculous."

And even when the "truth" seems self-evident from the mountains of data, there is still no guarantee that the most solid intelligence will have any impact. Again, the problem is human: policymakers are often products of a catechism of assumptions and political beliefs which no amount of information or intelligence will shake. There are legions of recent historical examples; perhaps the most striking contemporary one is Vietnam. In Vietnam, despite all evidence of history to the contrary, the United States believed as an article of faith that it could "win" by transforming South Vietnam's rickety regime into some sort of bulwark against which North Vietnam and the Vietnamese Communist movement would be dashed to pieces.

This delusionary process has been called "the pleasure of self-deception," an accurate phrase which describes the dynamic underlying an interesting statistic: of nine major surprise strategic attacks throughout the world since 1940, not one was truly a surprise. In each case, leaders of the nations about to be attacked knew such an attack was imminent, and in some cases were in possession of detailed intelligence

giving the date and hour of the attack. Yet, the leaders simply did not believe, so they discounted the intelligence which ran counter to what they knew in their heart of hearts was "fact." Not even a series of aggressive moves before the attack, unmistakably tipping the attacker's hand, could dissuade them. And so Josef Stalin in 1941 refused to believe a German invasion was imminent — "British provocation" he contemptuously scrawled across one intelligence report giving the precise day of the Nazi attack — and as a result, the Germans virtually wiped out the unalerted Red Air Force in the first few hours, their task eased considerably by Soviet planes parked wingtip to wingtip. Twenty-seven years later, the three top commanders of NATO went off on leave after discounting intelligence reports warning of an imminent Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; several hours after reaching their vacation spots, they heard on the radio that the invasion they had deemed "impossible" had taken place.

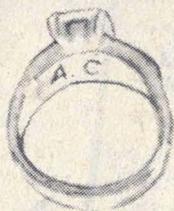
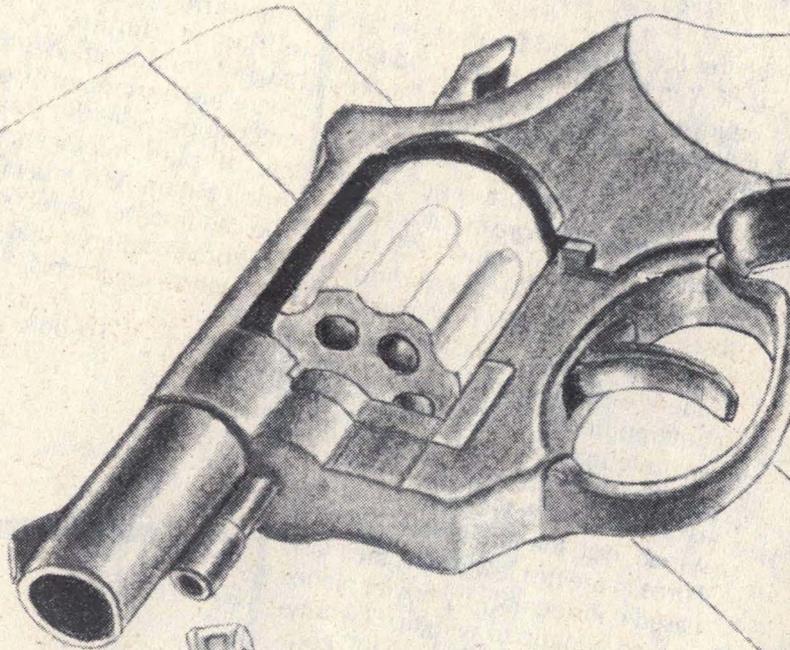
The consequences of the self-deception process can be catastrophic, for fundamentally all intelligence is about warning. Is danger imminent? Is the other side about to move? What are the significant trends? As Stalin's blindness in 1941 proved, intelligence most often is only as good as the people who are supposed to be using it. By no means, however, is Stalin's ap-

palling error the only example of intelligence failure of similar magnitude during World War II. There are a number of others, but that war provides the greatest example of pure intelligence myopia: Adolf Hitler. And it is in Hitler that we can find the perfect case history of human failures that bedevil intelligence judgments. →

To be continued . . .

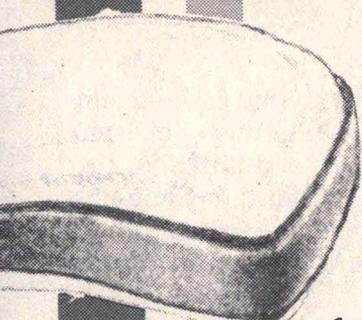


Ernest Volkman is a writer on intelligence and national security affairs whose work has appeared in a wide variety of publications. Currently a Contributing Editor of Penthouse magazine, where he handles national security investigations, his reports on intelligence technology also appear in Military Science and Technology, and Defense Science magazines. A former prize-winning National Editor and National Correspondent for Newsday, Volkman is the author of Legacy of Hate, published in 1982. The Devil's Sabbath, his history of American intelligence operations, will be published by Morrow early in 1985.



Winds Of Change

by John Lutz



“**L**ast night when I was with my wife I accidentally spoke your name.”

Alison didn't answer David immediately. Slanted sunlight blasted from between the clouds in the California sky and glinted off the highly polished gray hood of her 1936 Chevy convertible. Tommy Dorsey's band was playing swing on the dashboard radio. The car was five years old, but Alison regarded it as if it were the newest model. She had only recently been able to afford such a luxury.

“What was your wife's reaction?” she asked at last, shifting gears for a steep grade in the twisting road.

David threw back his handsome head, his blond hair whipping forward in the turmoil of wind, and laughed. “None. She didn't understand me, I'm sure. There's so much she doesn't understand about me.”

Alison didn't caution him to be more discreet, as she usually did. She seemed lulled by their motion through the warm, balmy evening. Her long auburn hair flowed gracefully where it curled from beneath the scarf that covered her head and was knotted beneath her chin. She knew that she and David were an enviable young couple in her sleek convertible, speeding along the coast road in mountainous Big Sur Country, with the shaded, thick redwood forest on their right and the sea, charging the shore and crashing sun-shot against the rocks on their left.

He extended a long arm and languidly, affectionately, dragged his fingertips across the shoulder of her wool sweater. She felt her heart accelerate at his touch.

“My wife doesn't know you're a spy,” he said.

Alison turned her head toward him and smiled. “Let's hope not.”

She braked the convertible, shifted gears again, and pulled to the side of the highway. Then she drove up the narrow, faintly defined dirt road that led to their usual picnic place. Within a few minutes, the car was parked in the shade of the redwood trees of smaller variety that grew in that wild section of California.

She got the wicker picnic basket from the trunk, watching David's tall, lanky frame as he quite carefully spread the blanket on the grass. David was a methodical person, which was why he was good at his job; he had a talent and fondness for order. Alison stopped and deftly straightened the seams of her nylons, then joined him.

Alison Carter and David Blaine both worked at Norris Aircraft Corporation just north of Los Angeles. Alison was a secretary and David the chief of security. The people who were paying Alison for information about the top-secret XP25 pursuit plane had advised her to strike up an acquaintance with the plant security chief. If she were caught, the relationship would be a valuable insurance policy.

Of course Alison had followed their advice. She believed everything they told her. She had been barely eighteen when Karl Prager had first approached her, had first become her lover. Nineteen when their affair was over and she was in too deeply as an informer ever to hope she might get out.

Not that it had bothered Alison to sell "industrial information." Oh, she knew she was working for the Germans, actually, but what difference did that make? It wasn't as if America was at war. Politics didn't interest Alison in the slightest, and the money Karl paid her more than doubled her meager salary earned as a secretary.

Alison hadn't had to think of a way to meet David. Her rather extravagant habits, considering her salary, prompted him to ask her some routine questions one day. When she'd told him she was the beneficiary of her late father's will, he'd believed her.

They'd seen each other again, after business hours, despite the fact that David was married. Apparently he and his wife Glenda were having difficulties. For Alison, the business of seducing the shy and precise David Blaine quickly became pleasure. And by the time he found out she was violating company rules, he was willing to overlook her transgressions.

On Saturdays, David would often give Glenda an excuse, that probably even she didn't believe, and he and Alison would drive up the coast road in Alison's convertible and picnic with sandwiches and champagne in their private, lover's hideaway.

Alison sat down beside David on the blanket. She untied and removed her head scarf, plucking out the bobby pins helping to hold it in place. Through the trees, the undulating blue-green sea was barely visible, but she could hear its enigmatic whisper on the rocky beach.

David paused in unwrapping the sandwiches. He dug into his shirt pocket and handed Alison a folded sheet of paper patterned with scrawled numbers. "Here," he said casually, "these are the performance specifications you asked for."

The figures represented the data on the experimental plane's latest test flight. Alison accepted the paper with a smile and slipped it into a pocket of her skirt. She knew that David took the business of revealing company information no more seriously than she did. He didn't know to whom she was giving the information — probably he assumed it was a rival aircraft manufacturer — and he didn't care. It was his love affair that was important to him, that had consumed his very soul, and not dry columns of figures that meant nothing except to an aeronautical engineer. He knew he'd be fired if the company found out about Alison and him, but he could always get another job of some sort. And he'd still have Alison.

After they'd eaten the ham sandwiches and

finished the champagne, David looked at her with his level blue eyes. His head was resting in her lap, and she was stroking his fine blond hair that was just beginning to thin at the crown of his head. Alison had thought the first time she saw David that he looked very much like movie star Richard Widmark.

"There's so much I want to say to you today," he told her.

"Not now," she said, bending her body and kissing him on the lips. "Let's not talk now."

As usual, David saw her point of view and agreed with it.

An hour later, in the purpling twilight, Alison lay on her back and watched a plane drone high overhead in the direction of the sea. A U.S. Navy plane, she noted, on a routine nighttime training mission.

David was asleep beside her, his deep, regular breathing merging with the sounds of the plane and the eternal sighing of the sea. Though her body was very still alongside his sleeping form, Alison's mind was tortured and turning.

Not that she had any real choice. Her time of choices was over. She wished David had never told her about speaking her name in front of his wife. But he had. And Alison knew that he might speak her name again in the wrong circumstances, even if tomorrow he still saw things her way.

Quietly, she rose from the blanket and fished in her straw purse for her key ring. She walked to her car, the tall grass tickling her bare feet and ankles, thinking *tomorrow, tomorrow . . .*

She unlocked and opened the car's trunk, and left it open as she returned to stand over David. She was holding a small revolver that she'd gotten from the trunk, the gun they had given her.

Alison didn't want to miss where she was aiming, didn't want to hurt him more than necessary. She did love him.

She knelt beside David, placing the gun barrel inches from his temple, and glanced in all directions to make certain they were alone. In the sudden chill breeze rushing in from the ocean, she drew in her breath sharply and squeezed the trigger.

The crack of the gun seemed feeble in the vastness of mountains and sea.

Alison sat with her eyes clenched shut until the sound of David moving on the blanket ceased. Then, still not looking at him, she returned to the car and got a shovel from the trunk.

She wrapped David's still body in the blanket and dragged it deeper into the forest. She began to dig.

In a very few hours, halfway around the world, a signal would be given, and the Japanese would attack Pearl Harbor. War would immediately be declared, not only against Japan but against Germany and Italy as well. The rules of the game Alison was being forced to play would abruptly change. Who knew if David would have been willing to continue to play if the stakes were real? Who could say what else he might have accidentally let slip to his wife? Alison knew that much more than her job, and perhaps a criminal record, depended on David's silence now. Her survival was at stake.

As she cast loose earth over the huddled, motionless form in the blanket, Alison didn't realize she was burying a ring in David's pocket, the engagement ring he had intended to give her when he awoke. The ring with her initials engraved inside the band. The ring wrapped loosely in a copy of the letter he had written to his wife, confessing everything and explaining why he was leaving her.

Alison worked frantically with the shovel, feeling her tears track hotly down her cheeks. At least David's war was over. He was at peace. Her war was just beginning, and look what it had already forced her to do.

She would be one of the first to realize why hers was a losing cause. →



A CAMEO DISAPPEARANCE

by E. Brooks Peters

The moon hung like an art-deco light bulb in the sky. It was one of those glorious New York nights in mid-October, when the sky is crystal clear and the temperature drops to that delightful degree that permits the wearing of a short fur wrap without concern for warmth. The kind of night when you feel as if you can see all the way across the Hudson to New Jersey and pick out the families huddling in front of their television sets watching the news, trying to catch a glimpse of you as you whirl through town on a series of social events.

The crowd at Lincoln Center was brisk and eager. It was the opening of the new season, and the majority of men were wearing tuxedos. Those who didn't couldn't afford to rent them and probably had standing room tickets anyway. The men smoked cigars and rattled on about the market and horses. The women listened, making mental notes to buy and sell, and flashed their jewels to keep their men off-guard.

The sleek black limo snaked its way through the gnarled traffic along Broadway. Inside, Tyler Cliff stretched his legs, checked his black satin bow tie, and poured himself another Glenfiddich. He was going to be late. No way around it. The only way to get to the Met by eight would be to get out of the limo and walk. But





Tyler Cliff didn't walk to the opera.

He buzzed his chauffeur. The black screen slid into its slot and Tyler could see the face of the chauffeur in the rear-view mirror.

"How many more blocks?" Tyler asked through the divider.

"Just around the bend here, sir," the young man spoke eagerly. "Another five minutes at the most, sir." Tyler put his drink back on the bar and leaned forward.

"Pull up to the side entrance as usual."

"As you wish, sir. Sorry about the traffic," the young driver apologized.

"It's not your fault we're late," Tyler responded in a voice which betrayed a slight irritation. He was still furious with Valerie. Why did she have to cancel their date at the last minute? It was her idea to go to the opera in the first place. He'd already seen it last year and, frankly, he just wasn't up to another night of false smiles and moist handshakes. He would just have to give his other ticket away.

The stretch slinked along 66th Street. Smoothly the chauffeur pulled alongside the curb, a few feet from a tall embankment of steps.

"We're here."

Tyler looked at his watch. It was five past eight. They couldn't have started the damned opera yet. That wouldn't allow enough time for the well-dressed Monday nighters to see Tyler Cliff make his entrance. They were all waiting for him, eager to get a glimpse of the world famous fashion designer. The most eligible bachelor in all of America. The incredibly handsome, wildly sophisticated, vulgarly rich Tyler Cliff. Everyone wanted to see him. He was the most sought after guest at every party, every social, every opening. He was the star of New York's social world.

Tyler pulled the little mirror down from the carpeted wall in front of him. He checked himself. His face maintained the special good looks of a young model. Firm tan skin, clear blue eyes, fine wavy blonde hair. His dark eyebrows evoked a hidden sense of mystery. He'd made a fortune selling his clothes by modeling many of them himself. Tyler could not help but chuckle, still, when he thought of his incredible success.

As Tyler stepped out of the limo, he noticed a small group of men circling the fountain outside Lincoln Center. They looked Hispanic. They were dressed in jeans and leather jackets, and were



certainly out of place at the opening night of the Met. One of them nudged the fellow next to him, saying something in Spanish and pointing at Tyler.

Tyler wrote off his slight emotional reaction as another example of the discomfort one feels in being too well-dressed on occasion, especially in a city of extremes. He moved quickly past them and through the Met's revolving doors.

There was an audible murmur when Tyler entered the lobby of the opera house. People milling about, regarding schedules, sipping wine, chatting about what they'd done that summer, all stopped and stared. Some smiled at him. Some nodded to each other and spoke in hushed tones. Others avoided eye contact and lifted their heads a bit higher and spoke in louder voices. Still others, most of them younger women, moved closer to get a better look at Tyler Cliff.

He was joined by a group of friends almost immediately. Paul Raleigh, the owner of a large department store, was there with his wife. Raleigh slapped Tyler on the back and remarked how well he was looking. Zarah Raleigh looked up into Tyler's face and opened her big eyes even wider as she took in his good looks.

She looks like Imelda Marcos tonight, Tyler thought, and she seemed to be as demanding. Tyler noticed that she was wearing a magnificent cameo brooch just below her neck. It was an extremely beautiful rendition of *Liberty*.

She clutched his arm. "Oh Tyler, you must have dinner with us soon. I've purchased the most divine new apartment in the Trump Tower. You can see Connecticut from my window."

"I hope you have blinds," Tyler replied, a chiding look in his eye.

"Let's go in, it's about to start," Zarah tugged Tyler towards the entrance to the theater. "Isn't she just . . . brilliant? She's one of my dearest friends . . ." Zarah spoke as they moved through the crowds. She was referring to the evening's star, Mariella Bravas, the Argentine soprano who raised many eyebrows when she dropped the seventh veil doing *Salome*. She was opening the season for the third time. Tyler had known her since she was a classmate of his at Yale. He had listened to her warm-ups in the shower. Theirs had been a tempestuous affair and even after all these years, she and Tyler enjoyed a warm friendship.

Tyler surveyed the scene as they joined the throngs moving into the auditorium. He looked up towards the "Family Circle." Stand-



ing right in front of the balcony was the Hispanic who'd pointed at him outside. Tyler smiled, realizing it had been silly for him to have felt threatened by the man.

The rest of the people in the "Circle" were seated and Tyler had to squint to make out faces. Most of them were peering down at him. Some used opera glasses. One girl nudged her neighbor and giggled.

Zarah left Tyler at the fourth row. She and her husband had chairs — seats with their names engraved on the backs. They were true patrons of the opera, donating thousands of dollars a year to the institution. Zarah was sure to remind Tyler that she had paid for tonight's production. She always did. Tyler made his way to his seat in the second row and sat down.

The lights began to dim. Tyler looked at the people surrounding him — over fifty, properly dressed, plump with good life, perhaps a trifle weary — and then remembered his extra ticket. He checked to see if there was anyone standing who could use the free seat. He thought he saw a tall blond man wearing a trench coat standing by the door. He looked out of place. Tyler decided to ask him if he needed a seat. But as he was about to get up, the lights went out and he could no longer see the man.

The conductor stepped forward and made his way through the mass of black garbed musicians in the orchestra. He stood on his pedestal and bowed to the audience. Then, with a click of the baton, he started to conduct. The music was ethereal, romantic stuff. The opera was *Dialogue Of the Carmelites* — the story of a group of defiant nuns during the French Revolution.

The curtain was raised. There, on stage, was a huge cross raised on a platform. On the cross, one could make out the prostrate figures of twenty nuns, lying flat on their stomachs, their arms outstretched in prayer. It was a stirring vision. Tyler was mesmerized anew.

The nun at the front of the stage rose and stepped forward. It was Mariella Bravas. She opened her mouth to sing, but then there was a faint sound of breaking glass and instead of singing, she screamed.

There was a brief second of absolute stillness during which the scream echoed throughout the house. Then, as if each moment were frozen in time, figures moved in slow motion; consecutively, people began to react.



The orchestra threw down its instruments as wisps of a thick, greasy smoke arose from the orchestra pit, clouding the entire area. The black figures of the musicians scratched at the transparent smoke amid wild cries of pain that shattered the silence. Then, the smoke rose to the stage and the nuns began to cough and sputter, interspersing their heaving with high-pitched screams.

It still wasn't clear to those in the orchestra seats exactly what had happened. Then, as if a lightning bolt had struck him, Tyler felt a sharp pain blast through his nose. His lungs went into spasms and his eyes shot out tears of undiluted excruciating agony. He grabbed at his throat, scratching at his neck — and recognized the occurrence. It was the same gas that had been exploded in his face when he was a student at Yale in the sixties. Someone had dropped a tear gas bomb at the Met.

The place exploded into pandemonium. Tyler looked back to Zarah. She had fallen down and her husband was trying to lift her. He was hampered somewhat by a very old woman in mink who scrambled out from underneath them. Row by row, the crowds in the orchestra seats scurried to get to the side entrances. People were screaming, tripping, crying into their handkerchiefs, and gasping for air. The rich and mighty clawed at each other like rats locked in a trunk.

Tyler looked upwards. As yet, the gas had not risen high enough to affect the people in the balcony seats, though they hung over the railing inspecting the scene of ruin below. Then, as the gas rose, infiltrating their space, the first balcony cried out in unison and Tyler could see people jumping off the front tier to the orchestra seats below. He noticed the Hispanic was no longer there.

Tier by tier, the screams continued. The theater was completely inundated with the poisonous gas and everyone wanted out.

Tyler cut across a row by hopping over two seats and running for the side. He propped the door open with his back and covered his face with his handkerchief. He looked for Zarah and Paul but he couldn't see them. Giving up, he dashed through the door and out into the parking lot. At last he could feel the sweet, glorious influx of fresh air.

People started to rush by him, pushing, shoving, greedily sucking in clean air. He started to move with the tide but, just as he was passing a young couple giving each other mouth-to-mouth



resuscitation, he saw the old woman in mink collapse to the ground. He bent down, scooped her up in his arms, and carried her to a less crowded area. She looked around with frightened eyes, clutching her purse tight against her bosom. Tyler tried to take her hand but she clenched her fist and pulled herself away from him. Then she bulldozed into the crowd and disappeared.

Outside the auditorium, Tyler caught up with Zarah and Paul. They were standing against the fountain, leaning over its refreshing spray. Zarah had burst into tears — her body bobbing up and down like a piece of driftwood in surf — and Paul stroked her back with his right hand.

“Good God! What a nightmare!” Paul cried out when he saw Tyler approaching.

“Are you both alright?”

“I’m fine. Stomach feels like someone took a baseball bat to it,” Paul answered. Then indicating his wife, he added, “She’s a wreck. The stench hit her right in the face. And she tore her gown.” He consoled her by holding her closer to him.

“Who would do such a terrible thing?” Zarah screeched, her question cut short by her own angry scream. She grabbed at her neck, at the torn fabric of her gown, and collapsed to the concrete pavement.

“My brooch! The cameo! Oh no!” she cried, tears shooting from her dark brown eyes like bullets. “I’ve lost my brooch!”

It was true. She must have tripped on the satin length of her train when she fell, thereby pulling the fabric so taut that the brooch had popped off.

“It must have fallen off,” Zarah sighed, her tears quickly spent.

“Come on, dear, we have to leave,” Paul abruptly cut in.

“Do you want me to go back and look for it?” Tyler asked Zarah.

“No!” Paul answered abruptly for his wife.

“It won’t take long, Paul,” Zarah implored, but then something in Paul’s gaze caused her to cease. “No, Tyler. Thanks for asking. You’d never find it anyway, And it wasn’t worth anything; it was a gift. I wore it for sentimental reasons,” she sniffled.

“Well, if you say so,” Tyler said. “Take care of yourselves. See you again.”

Zarah smiled and gently nodded her head goodbye. Paul grabbed her arm and pulled her away, and Tyler couldn’t help but notice that Paul seemed unusually agitated, even in these extremely



agitating circumstances. But as Zarah stepped towards the waiting limousine, she squealed in pain.

"Ow! My leg!" She pulled back the hem of her gown, exposing a mammoth bruise on her shin. It resembled an eggplant.

"I must have hurt myself when I fell," she said in a whimpering whine.

"How *did* you fall?" Tyler asked, staring at the strange bruise.

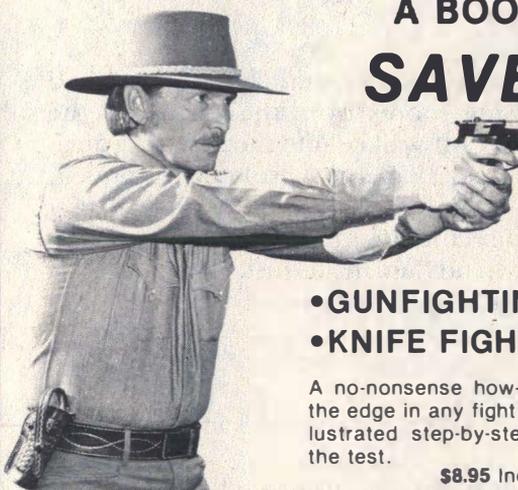
"I don't know."

"Looks like someone kicked you with a stiletto heel."

"Enough." Paul interrupted. "Really, now, Zarah, we must go!"

Tyler watched silently as Paul helped Zarah inside the car. There was definitely something odd about Paul's behavior, Tyler thought. But right now, he couldn't put his finger on it. He decided to hang around the Center and see what the police came up with after

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their investigation of the gas explosion. Tyler waved at the couple as their limo pulled away. Then he felt someone tap his shoulder as he was moving back toward the building.

"Mr. Cliff, may I have your autograph, please?" she said, giggling childishly.

"I . . . I'm not . . ." Tyler tried to back out but the grin on the girl's face immediately began to transform into the ugly shape of a sneer. Tyler did not want a sneer on the face of a prospective customer, even if she wouldn't look well in his clothes.

"I'm not adverse to it," he smiled. The sneer vanished from her face and was replaced by a charming grin. He signed the pink sheet she handed him and wrote, *It's your life, honey!* in his bold script. That was his motto; part of the ad campaign that had sold his clothes and made him a name to reckon with in the fashion world.

"Thanks a lot, Mr. Cliff," she squealed, as he performed a mock bow and turned on his heel. Over his shoulder he heard her yell — "You're *gorgeous*, Tyler!"

The backstage area was in a state of turmoil. The police had blocked off the dressing rooms from the press and the curious, but when Tyler Cliff walked into the receiving area, and nodded to Johnny, the security guard who knew him well, he was permitted entrance.

Roger Stevens, publicity director for the opera company, ran over to Tyler and threw his hands up in disgust.

"Tyler! It's just too dreadful! I can't believe anyone would do such a loathsome thing!"

"What about Bravas?" Tyler inquired. "Is she okay?" It would be a disaster if she lost her voice.

At that point, Stevens turned a dark blue and began to whimper uncontrollably.

"She's blind, Tyler! Totally blind!" he screamed. The whole room heard him. The press raced to the phones, and the exit doors for cabs back to their offices. The news was no longer that a bomb had been dropped at the Met, and hundreds of the rich had been exposed to danger; no, the news was that Mariella Bravas was blind. The world's greatest opera singer blinded by a terrorist's poisonous gas explosion! It was a front page story!

Tyler Cliff reacted to the news calmly, betraying none of the



grief he felt. If she was permanently blind, it was a tragic loss. He had to see her.

"Is she still here," he whispered to Roger Stevens.

"Yes . . . the ambulance only just arrived. Can you believe it? The world's finest voice, the great Bravas, and the ambulance takes a half hour to arrive!"

Suddenly, there was a commotion behind him, closer to the dressing room area. Someone cried out, "It's her! It's Bravas!"

Behind the crowd, the door to Bravas' dressing room was opened and a portion of a stretcher was visible. And throughout the room the rich mellifluous vibrato of Mariella Bravas wailed:

"The bastards! I'll kill them. I'll kill them all!" Then her head passed the barrier of the door and the roomful of reporters and detectives fell silent. Mariella Bravas' face was hidden behind a series of white bandages, the only opening a slit for her mouth from which the cries and curses escaped.

Roger Stevens turned back to Tyler Cliff and almost fell to his knees, "Oh Tyler, I can't bear to watch! It's so . . . so . . . *ghastly!*"

At the sound of the name, Tyler, Mariella Bravas stopped her litany of profanity. She propped her head up and turned her bandaged face in the direction of Roger Stevens.

"Roger, darling, did you say Tyler? Tyler Cliff?"

"Yes, my diva, he's right here. He was there. He was a witness. He knows . . ."

"Shut up, Roger. Enough of the background. Tyler! Come here and soothe me."

Tyler Cliff stepped toward the great Bravas. "Mariella, my dear," he whispered into her ear, as he knelt next to her stretcher. "Let me take you to the hospital. I had no idea you were hurt." He clasped her left hand and gave it a tender squeeze.

"No . . . please don't bother, Ty. I'll be okay. My ambulance has arrived."

"Do they know who did it?" Tyler asked her quietly.

"They say it was a group of Hispanics. Terrorists," she answered in a hoarse voice.

Tyler leaned closer. Pressing his cheek against hers he could still smell the tear gas in her hair.

"The bastards!" she whispered again, but her voice trailed off as the searing pain in her eyes caused her to pass out.

Tyler rose and called to the awaiting ambulance men. "Take her



to the hospital immediately. I'm afraid she's in shock."

The streets were thick with taxi cabs and out-of-town cars. Tyler Cliff had decided not to take his limo back to his penthouse apartment. It would be a long walk to 81st Street and Central Park West, but it would do him good.

Tyler went over the facts in his mind, as he stepped quickly along Columbus Avenue: The group of Hispanic men standing around the fountain. The one standing in the family circle. Then, the strange blond man in the trench coat at the door, directly in line with the aisle of seats that Paul and Zarah Raleigh sat in. He must have jumped over the seats when the bomb first exploded and grabbed the brooch and Zarah tripped and fell against the old woman. He wanted the cameo. But why? Could the brooch really be the reason the terrorists tear-gassed 4000 people at the opening of the Met? It was too extreme. It didn't make sense. There were a thousand other means of taking it away from her. Besides, what could be in that cameo that made it so valuable?

Suddenly, Tyler remembered something. A detail he had overlooked in the mad rush to seats and the hysteria that followed. That damn cameo, he thought. Of course. He turned around and hailed a cab. Raleigh had some explaining to do.

Tyler arrived at Trump Tower a little after nine-thirty, but there was no answer when the nightman buzzed the Raleigh's apartment. Tyler excused himself and then sneaked past the guard as another visitor approached. He took the elevator to their floor and found the Raleigh's door open. Security in Trump was good, but not good enough to leave a door wide open in New York City.

He entered the sumptuous space and walked briskly across the marble floor. He knew instantly that something was wrong. Terribly wrong. His heels clacked as he made his way into the "rec" room, clearly the room in which Paul and Zarah held their parties. It was a voluptuous space, replete with a screening room that included four-foot video displays and arcade games. The room smelled of leather. The vinyl couches had been sprayed with the odor and it continued to cling to the air like fall-out.

Tyler crossed the room and passed the bar. He noticed a glass of half-touched bourbon on the bar. Next to that he saw the



vestiges of a line of cocaine. Poor Zarah, he thought. Still inhaling the rich man's aspirin.

Something on the mirror holding the line of coke caused Tyler to stop and move in closer. The razor blade used to cut and grind the expensive crystals into a fine powder was stained. Tyler shuddered. There was a drop of dark red blood on it.

He ran behind the bar, and then he saw her. Zarah was lying huddled in a heap, her long black hair crumpled in a hideous furry ball held tightly in her fist. It was her fall. Looking at her head, Tyler could make out the thinning gray hair of a very old woman. Poor Zarah. He knelt and lifted her head with his hand. He was extremely careful not to make any noise but his knees cracked as he went down. The sound of the snap echoed throughout the room.

Deftly, he inspected her neck. No pulse. She was dead. Then, her hand fell from within the bar and Tyler could see the streaks of red that wound their way down from her wrist to her fingers. Suicide? Tyler looked at the series of gashes along her left wrist. They were deep . . . too deep. It was a botched job. Zarah was left-handed. She would never have been able to cut herself so deeply with her less-used right hand. Raleigh. Tyler's mind raced with scenarios. Was he dead, too? Was he in the bathroom, hanging from the shower nozzle? Or was he responsible for murdering his beloved wife? What possible motive could he have? Tyler dismissed the idea immediately. Raleigh would have known his wife was left-handed. He wouldn't make such a mistake.

Suddenly, Tyler was surprised by the cold numbing sensation of a revolver's tip positioned at the base of his neck.

He turned around, feeling the gunhead follow his movements tightly. He looked up and was not surprised. It was the blond man in the ugly trench coat.

"She was a very unhappy woman," the blond said, in an accent thick with a southern drawl.

"She is now," Tyler responded, getting up. The blond pulled his gun closer to himself.

"No tricks, now, Mr. Jet-Set," he spat out. "Follow me."

He led Tyler to the bedroom. Tyler could see Raleigh spread out on the bedspread. They moved closer, and he could tell by the acute smile on Raleigh's face that he had been poisoned.

"Why did you have to kill them?" Tyler asked, his voice hushed



in horror.

"Standard procedure," the man mumbled. "They'll both be written up as suicides. It's not uncommon among the very rich."

"Only a fool would believe that. But why *them*?" Tyler shot back, his horror now becoming fury.

"We needed something. Something that contained pertinent and confidential information."

"The cameo?"

"Yes. You noticed it was missing?"

"Of course. She told me."

"That's what I was afraid of."

Tyler was disturbed by the tone of his last remark. "You're not going to kill me, too, just because I know you needed some stupid brooch!" he commented.

"Later. First we have to get the cameo."

"What? But you just killed them! You *don't* have the cameo? Why did you kill them?"

"They were spies, Mr. Cliff. We were delighted to kill them, with or without the cameo." The man chuckled, exposing his gray teeth.

"Spies!" Tyler was incredulous. "I don't believe it!"

The man reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a wallet containing a badge and an I. D. The blond was from the CIA.

"Have you ever heard of FALN?" he inquired.

"I don't know what the letters stand for but they're the group that wants Puerto Rico to be independent of the United States," Tyler answered.

"Exactly."

"Now tell me what the Raleighs could possibly have to do with that, except that they were witnesses to this evening's attack!" Tyler shouted.

"Cool it, Jack. You seem to think you're so smart . . . well, you didn't know your friends that well. The Raleighs were agents of the FALN. She was trained as a terrorist during the second world war — there is some evidence that she was involved in the assassination attempt on Truman, but that was a long time ago. Her real name was Calienta Rojas. She bribed Raleigh into marrying her and then brainwashed him into working for her people. He wired top secret files through to Puerto Rico by way of stock figures sent electronically to his company headquarters in San



Juan. Tonight's bombing of the Met was their little brainchild," he explained, without expressing any emotion.

"But why would they bother to show up?" Tyler wanted to know.

"The perfect alibi," the man answered. "Their seats were next to the exit. That's why I watched them so closely. We had word from a reliable source that they would be attending tonight's festivities, and that Zarah would be wearing a cameo that contained the latest top secret information she would pass along to her husband's contacts."

"But why tear gas the Met?" Tyler insisted.

"They knew they were being trailed. They needed to cause a disturbance to distract us. It worked. She managed to hide the cameo. I haven't been able to find it here."

"Sounds to me like you need to take a refresher course in espionage," Tyler remarked archly.

"Why don't you do your country a favor, Mr. Cliff, and give us the cameo?"

"What?" Tyler replied, shocked. "I don't have it!"

"Then explain to me why you raced back here after the explosion . . . except to deliver the missing item! Correct?" The man spoke in clipped tones, cocking his gun at Tyler.

"I told you I don't have it."

"Prove it."

"I refuse to answer any more of these scurrilous accusations. I want to call my lawyer."

"Strip!" the man ordered.

"How dare you!" Tyler cried back. "I can hire the best lawyer in the country — in the world! — and let you hang by the thinnest shred of evidence you have against me!" He laughed in the blond's face.

Then a voice broke through Tyler's laughter, a beautiful voice. It was Mariella Bravas.

"Your humor in the face of death, Tyler, is commendable."

Tyler spun around and saw the great diva standing at the door to the bedroom. She was wearing a long-flowing white evening gown. She held a revolver in her hand.

"Mariella," he gasped. "Your eyes . . . they're normal!"

"A ruse, my dear. Just a simple ruse. I thought it best to get out of that hell-hole as best I could without being interrogated by the



police. Roger thought up the blind bit. He's such a creative publicist, don't you think?" she said, her brilliant smile brighter than the moon.

"What are you doing here?" the CIA agent cried out.

"Wouldn't you like to know, you idiot," she barked back. "You've screwed up ever since you started. Why don't you go back to Washington and arrest congressmen, or something."

She took his gun. "Get out of the way," Mariella snapped. He moved to the side and promptly shut up.

"How do you fit into this little thriller?" Tyler asked her.

"I fit in perfectly, darling. I'm a Red Spy."

"I don't believe it."

"Oh believe it, Ty. Not all opera lovers are republicans."

"But what do the communists have to do with FALN?"

"A free Puerto Rico would be very good news for Fidel, don't you think?"

"You'll never succeed!" the CIA man interrupted, his face as red as a stop sign.

"Shut up!" Mariella replied, pointing her gun at him and pulling the trigger. The blond fell to his knees and cried out in considerable pain. He'd survive.

"Anyway, as I was saying," Mariella continued, "Roger had arranged for a private ambulance to take me home for a quick shower, a change of clothes, and a short trip here to pick up the cameo. I never expected you'd be here. Although I'm not surprised; you have a knack for uncovering dirt."

"It was because of the cameo," Tyler replied cautiously. "I was heading home, thinking about the missing brooch, when I remembered where I'd first seen it. It was such an unusual cameo it was hard to forget. I remembered it had been yours when we were both at Yale. You told me that your father had given it to you before he died and you left Argentina."

"I've always enjoyed lying," she interrupted, smiling at him.

"Well, I can be taken for a ride sometimes. Especially when the liar is so exotic a beauty."

"Thank you, Tyler."

"So, anyway, when I remembered the cameo, I got to thinking. Why would Zarah be wearing your cameo? Unless . . . unless Raleigh gave it to her. It crossed my mind that maybe you had sold it to him because you were broke. I hurried over here to see



if that was the case. I was going to lend you some money.”

“That’s very kind of you, dear, but you were wrong, weren’t you?”

“I sure was.”

“I’m sorry you had to get mixed up in this whole thing. It would have been better for you if you’d remained ignorant. Now I have to think about what I can do with you . . . ”

“But what about the cameo?”

“Dammit, I keep forgetting. Where do you think it is?”

“It was stolen.” Suddenly, as if inspired by his imminent death, Tyler’s mind reached a pinnacle of clarity. He saw the whole scene. Zarah being kicked in the shins by the old woman in a mink coat that was decades out of style. The old woman grabbing the brooch as Zarah fell on top of her; then Tyler carrying her out the door, the woman clutching the cameo in her fist, fearful of anyone catching her. She wasn’t a spy, the old biddy. She was just a thief. Tyler could not restrain the burst of laughter that exploded from his body. How perfectly ridiculous, he realized.

“What is so funny!” Mariella demanded.

“The cameo! Some old woman stole it. You’ll never get it back now unless you attend every bridge party in Manhattan.”

“I’m in stitches,” Mariella replied, sarcastically.

She pulled the gun back and was about to squeeze her finger on the trigger when Tyler sprang forward, pressing the full weight of his head against her gut, sending her sprawling against the wall. The gun went off, shattering the mirror across the room. Both Mariella and Tyler stopped to look at their reflections in the shards. Then Tyler pulled both of her arms together and tied them behind her back with the belt sash of her dress.

“Damn you, Tyler! Don’t turn me over to the police. I’ll give you anything . . . I’ll . . . ”

“Mariella, one of the advantages to being a multi-millionaire is that no one can bargain with you. You should know better than that.”

“I don’t want to spend the rest of my life behind bars! I hate institutional food!

“Tyler!”

“It’s your life, honey!” Tyler snapped back. With that, he reached for the phone. He looked over at his old friend, Mariella Bravas. She would look splendid in stripes. +

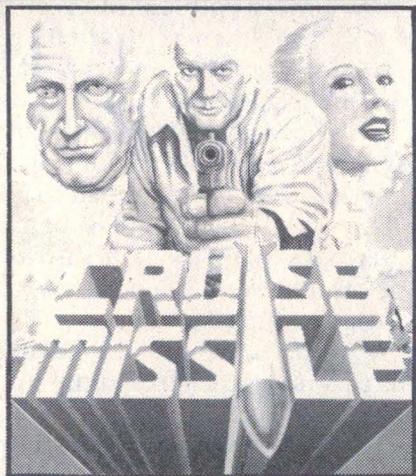


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YOU CAN'T



FOOL A WIFE

by Ardath Mayhar

Illustration by Robert Spike

*To the Gentlemen who manage
the Kremlin/the KGB,
whichever is appropriate:*

Dear Sirs:

Although you may know my name, for reasons to be covered somewhat later in this letter, I feel certain that you have never expected to hear directly from me. Knowing how men operate, that doesn't surprise me at all. But I am (was?) the wife of Conrad Disston, the Conradin Petroleum representative who recently made a trip to Moscow for discussions of drilling equipment with some of your petroleum people. Besides being a partner in that business, Conrad was an adviser to the U.S. government, which I am certain that you know (and knew). I can see your eyes squinting up, trying to figure out how I know that the man who came back to Texas and to me isn't the same Conrad Disston who started out. Only a man would have to wonder.

Did you really think that the way a person looks, talks, and walks is all there is to him? Short-sighted! Somehow, with all the experience I'm told that you people have in spying, I'd have expected more of you.

Of course this person is the same size, build, coloring, etc., as my husband was. But didn't it occur to you that a wife, more than anyone else in the world, has occasion not only to see and hear but also to smell and taste her husband? It didn't? What kind of marriages do they have over there, anyway? This character is a lot saltier than

Conrad ever was.

He memorized our friends and business associates pretty well, I must admit, and you even thought to question Conrad (under sodium pentothal? I'm curious) about the techniques with which he makes love. But you must be a humorless bunch. He doesn't know any of our private jokes or have any notion of the silly way we carry on in bed. That's sloppy work. Very sloppy work.

Conrad is either dead, in which case I can't help him any, or he's being held secretly, and that seems to be the same situation. If I went to our government with this, they'd shake their heads and think, "Silly woman!" and call (not-) Conrad to come get me and take me to a shrink. I know them. They're men too.

But I also know Conrad (knew him?), and I understand exactly what he'd want me to do about this. Conrad loved money almost as much as he loved me and the business. He'd want me to make a killing (bad choice of words, there) off of it. Which I intend to do.

Now, don't think that you can kill me or shoot me full of drugs or anything like that, and keep your man in place over here. I've sent hair brushings, skin fragments, all kinds of personal stuff from your representative off to the company lab and had them analyzed, using a convenient (stupid) go-between. The bits and pieces of Conrad left around the house and in his things were also collected and analyzed. The two do not match. Those results are in a safe place, where they will come to light at once if any-

thing at all happens to me, along with a copy of this letter — by the time this gets to you. Getting at me will jeopardize whatever it is that you intend for this fellow to do.

Don't worry about this letter, either. You will note that it is postmarked Moscow. I have a lot of friends who travel a great deal, and some of them are pretty remote chance acquaintances. Don't think you'll get anyplace trying to find out which tourist (not necessarily American) in Russia carried this over for me.

"What is she getting at?" I can feel you wondering it, all the way across the landmasses and the oceans between us. Money, of course. What else? I told you Conrad loves money, and we were much alike in that. Though there is a lot of stock, much property, all kinds of stuff, your man is now in control of most of it. I'd have to divorce him in order to get half, according to Texas law, and I'm sure you wouldn't like that kind of attention drawn to old Fred, or whatever his name is.

I want from you (I hope you're sitting down) a million dollars, to be deposited in a Swiss bank account, whose number is attached in the sealed envelope herewith. And hereafter, every year, a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, every December 25th. I thought that was appropriate — Conrad was sentimental about Christmas. In addition (don't flinch — this won't cost you anything), you can send word to Fred that I have a permanent headache. He doesn't turn me on, and he has bad breath. Also, his big toes are longer than the rest, and Conrad's were exactly

even. That bothers me more than almost anything else.

All in all, I think that you need to put a woman in the KSB, or whatever. You missed too many important things. Nobody in the office or the government agencies will ever catch on that Fred isn't Conrad...that's obvious, and you were right about that. But nobody can fool a wife about her husband. Nobody. A woman would keep reminding you of that, and maybe you'd pick unmarried men to duplicate from now on. That would not only help your aims along, but it would keep any other woman from being put in my predicament.

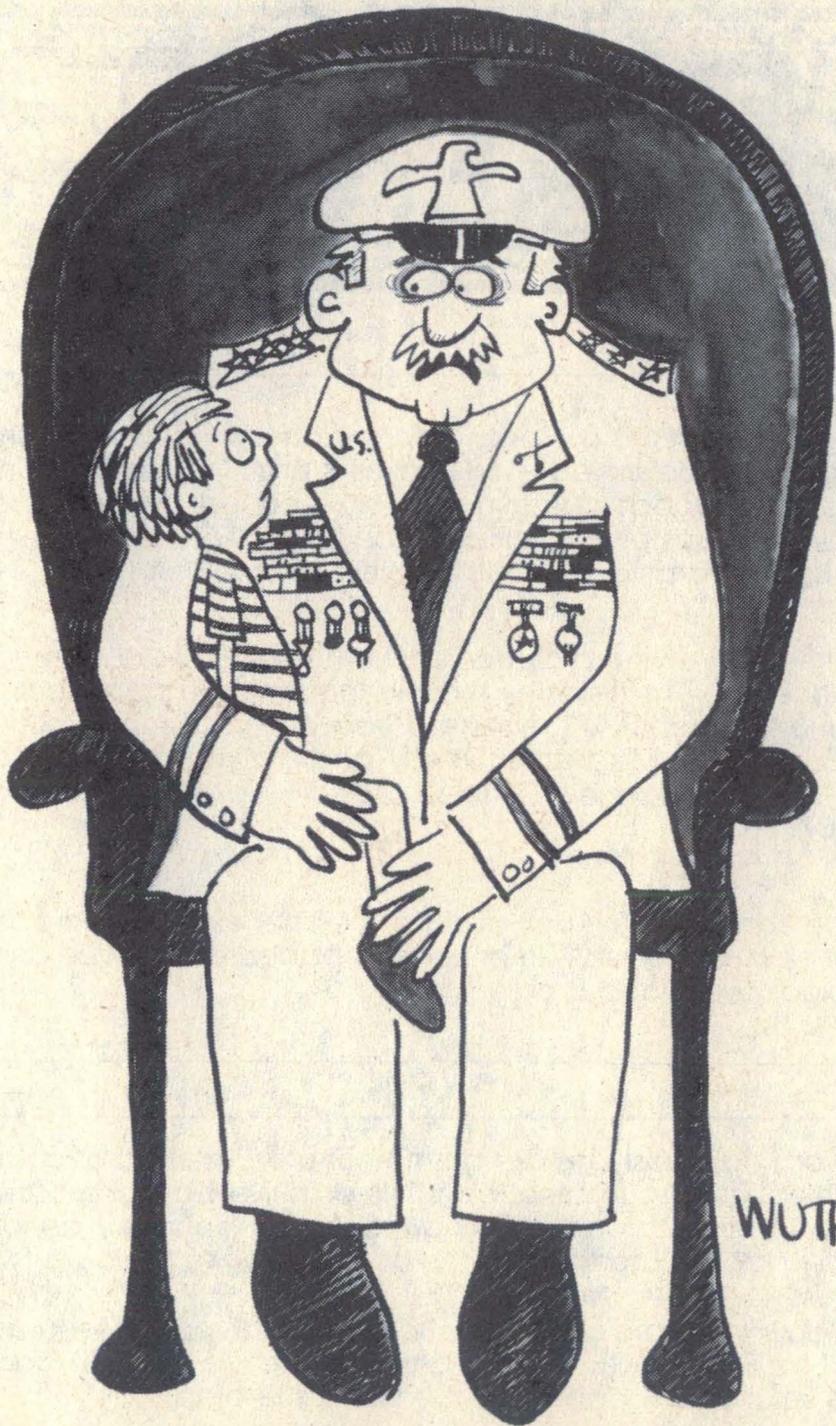
I loved Conrad. I could cheerfully scrag the lot of you, if that were possible. As it is, I can bleed you a bit. You'd better be glad that my folks raised me to act like a lady and not to be greedy, otherwise you'd really develop a hemorrhage in the wallet.

You may wonder how I can square letting Fred do whatever it is he is supposed to do to my country with my conscience...or do you believe in consciences? I've watched all this jockeying around for the past forty years, and believe me, I'm sick of all of you on both sides of the fence. I'm sure that somewhere over there there's somebody just like Fred, fooling the hell out of you. I just hope my people were bright enough to pick a bachelor.

Honestly, men!

*Yours confidently,
Louise Sneed Disston*

cc / filed in secure place



WUTHRICH

*"Errr . . . You were shot out of a HOWITZER.
Any more questions . . . ?"*

GAME

A cryptogram is a cipher, and a cipher is just a problem begging to be solved — all it takes is brain power, intuition, and a dogged determination to succeed. Since these characteristics pretty well describe ESPIONAGE readers, we thought we'd give you a little cipher to dwell on. 

Although solving a cipher is its own reward, we're adding an incentive: The first three readers to submit the correct solution to this cipher will receive a free, one-year subscription to ESPIONAGE Magazine. Simply address your solutions to ESPIONAGE Magazine Cipher Contest, P.O. Box 1184, Teaneck, NJ 07666.

We can't tell you much about this cipher except, perhaps, that it can be solved with pencil and paper, some coffee and a clear eye. Good Luck!

Word transpositions are a time-honored method of communications security, though a little primitive in the computer age. To prove how perplexing they could be to the pencil and paper cryptanalysts of the past, here's one for you to try: 

For an immediate copy of the solution to this puzzle send an SASE to: ESPIONAGE, EC-1, P.O. Box 1184, Teaneck, N.J. 07666. The solution will appear in the next issue of ESPIONAGE.

PAGES

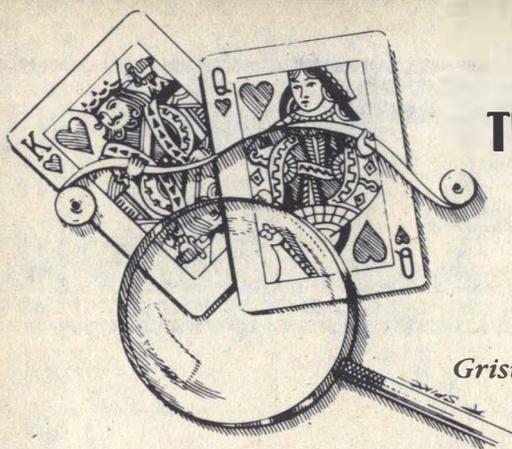
CIPHER #1



AXQBD	AUSSE	FXRMP	TVDAY	HRSHW	MWOUY
XVNNY	FOMMK	WAOVF	HOIRY	VRTVM	NTNNH
AXQBF	KOINM	TVIUN	PWOMY	TFOUY	ADIUJ
TFSMA	VOMNF	VCNVW	UNHMA	CWBTF	VEQNN
QAUOK	NQOUX	DAYAS	NWDVV	HFNEW	GWIBV
TFXAH	AAYUC	AAOMS	FMMPV	KFSNM	WIKAR
HAYTW	FLSEX	VOIMF	MABHM	BWTLQ	OPKUO
TOFDF	UDOAH	EUVUY	XIQNF	HESTY	AKSPE
BKQLE	XDNNS	LYNIW	KFTGW	XKXGS	KQIOT
KLTUK	HMF PW	WAENW	VCKVE	QBSLS	PAFHC
HIQTI	UDIVF	KUQFS	LDVOS	OKTCE	FGQRY
VRTMA	TBSFW	BFTUO	XIKAU	VIHOA	AXQLW
TISSA	KBQVV	BDQKW	BAMPA	AKTDS	HOSSS
LDTDF	DBQPD	FINPE	PWDAX	OACLU	VDABW
FKAEE	OAAAK	VFQLD	IIUUS	LDUMS	HGIUN
TBEFE	BUNNW	TLKAH	AXQBD	AUPOE	TFQCU
TFNTK	HWOVV	HLMVI	TGVGE	HABUL	VOTLE
BDUUF	DKAYS	KTABM	YDOVV	HOQBF	HIIUN
XKIMS	LDSTH	PWYOS	TRSSR	TGTGD	THWKT



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The Queen and King SOLUTION

Griswold's interpretation of the message follows:

"It says the Queen and King of Hearts," said Griswold, "and that's impossible. If it were Q, J, the Queen and Jack of Hearts, I would accept having the Q come first. I couldn't believe that anyone would put Queen ahead of King. That would be too anti-conventional."

"And then it occurred to me that 'Jack' is an old colloquialism for a servant. You have the King, the Queen, and a head servant at court, a seneschal, or something. Well, an older term for the card we call a Jack, is 'Knave,' which also means 'servant.' What if 'Q, K' does not stand for Queen and King of Hearts, but for Queen and Knave of Hearts."

"What if it does?" asked Baranof.

"The only reason," said Griswold, "we remember the older term is that it occurs in a nursery rhyme which retains its hold on us chiefly because it plays an important role in 'Alice in Wonderland.' You probably remember how it goes —

*The Queen of Hearts
She made some tarts,
All on a summer's day;
The Knave of Hearts
He stole those tarts,
And with them ran away.*

"Just substitute 'cookie' for 'tarts' and it tells the story quite clearly. Don't you think so?"

It did. What could we say? →

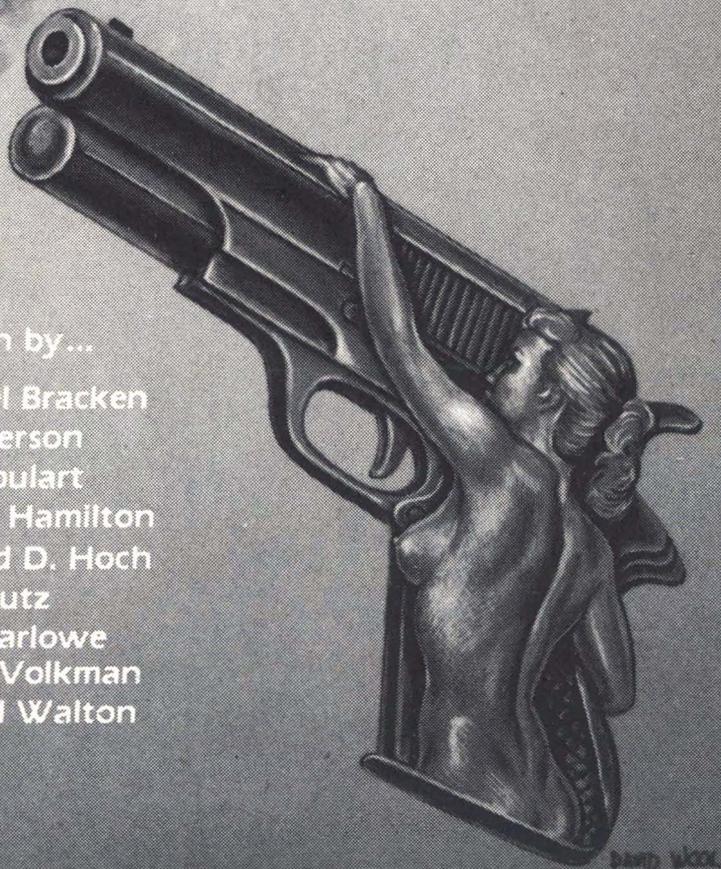
ESPIONAGE

MAGAZINE

Coming next issue...January/February
1985, on-sale December 13, 1984.

Fiction by...

Michael Bracken
Jack Gerson
Ron Goulart
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Edward D. Hoch
John Lutz
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Did you know...

General Irwin Rommel, "The Desert Fox," was known for his uncanny ability to thwart British plans and always hit the British at their weakest point. In his North Africa Campaign of 1941-42, his successes were legendary. It was as if he couldn't lose.

It is a little known fact, but Rommel had a reserved seat within British military headquarters.

Attached to British headquarters was the American military attache in Cairo, Colonel Bonner F. Fellers. Each evening, Fellers filed detailed and accurate reports to Washington, as was his job. Unfortunately, he radioed his messages in the *BLACK code*, which, unbeknown to the Allies, the Germans had already broken. Each night, therefore, German antennae welcomed his thorough battle status reports.

Within hours, Rommel was reading the briefings of the British 8th Army. Whatever Fellers reported, Rommel acted on — trapping commando teams, sinking British ships, and in seventeen days, throwing the British back 300 miles.

Finally, as part of an allied security leak search, President Roosevelt had Fellers' security measures investigated and recalled him to Washington. Rommel lost his seat around the 8th Army conference table, and the British started rolling the Afrika Korps back to Tunis.



Steganography is the art of concealing messages. It includes the science of secret inks, used to conceal information and orders in times of war, but used equally effectively to conceal, shall we say, "ill-conceived affairs of the heart."

In his poem, "The Art of Love," Ovid advised "A Letter is also safe and escapes the eye when written in new milk; touch it with coal dust and you will read. That too will deceive which is written with a stalk of moistened flax, and a pure sheet will bear hidden marks."

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January/February 1985,**

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