

***The Cossack Variation:***  
**A “Realistic” Cold War Spy Novel**

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***The Cossack Variation:***  
**A “Realistic” Cold War Spy Novel**

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## Abstract

*The Cossack Variation: A "Realistic" Cold War Spy Novel* is a practice-related thesis that combines an analytical commentary with a creative writing portfolio, namely a novel intended to be of publishable quality. The central point of contention is the idea that spy fiction can be divided into two strands: the more "romantic", "sensationalist" or "heroic" variant epitomised by Ian Fleming's James Bond stories and the more "realistic" approach for which the standard-bearer is John le Carré. The aim of the thesis is, through an interrogation of this alleged bifurcation by means a critical review of relevant scholarly research and a wide range of Cold War spy fiction, to examine and define the concept of "realistic" spy fiction, before applying the results of that examination to the writing of a novel which centres on the hunt for a mole in the upper echelons of the CIA.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part One introduces the critical contexts and theoretical framework for the novel that constitutes Part Two. Part Three comprises a reflective commentary that reviews the writing process as well as the relationship between Parts One and Two.

The original contribution of the thesis to knowledge and practice is threefold. Firstly, it reviews, develops and intervenes in the existing literature on "realistic" spy fiction. Secondly, the novel, loosely based on the exploits of real-life double agents Aldrich Ames and Ryszard Kuklinski, is intent on catalysing an innovative rethink of the genre. It is designed to challenge deeply ingrained stereotypes of twentieth-century spy fiction by foregrounding a woman FBI agent as one of its two protagonists and deliberately opting for a 1980s setting widely eschewed by other recent writers in the genre. Further, it innovatively balances the representation of historical truth with an interest in the narrative craft in the handling of material previously unaddressed in written fiction. Thirdly, the thesis is an example of self-reflexive research-led practice which integrates scholarly research with innovative creative practice.

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## Introduction

*Ian Fleming created an appetite in people for some kind of realistic spy story and I happened to step in at that moment and feed the appetite.*

– John le Carré

### Context

*“The Cossack Variation: A ‘Realistic’ Cold War Spy Novel”* is a thesis for submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It consists of an analytical commentary and a portfolio of creative writing, namely, a full-length novel intended to be of publishable quality. The two components are essentially interrelated and designed to form an integrated whole. In short, to employ Linda Candy’s term, this is a practice-related project (2006: 1). I prefer this relatively neutral term, at least initially, because I am conscious that this is a field of study that, as Candy and Ernest Edmonds observe, “has yet to reach a settled status in terms of its definition and discourse” (2018: 63). In use are such terms as “practice-based research”, “practice-led research”, “practice as research”<sup>1</sup>, and as seems to be becoming popular in North America, “research-creation”.<sup>2</sup> These terms, as Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean point out, are often used loosely, and even interchangeably. Candy, however, does offer a clear distinction between practice-based and practice-led research:

1. If a creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-**based**.
2. If the research *leads* primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-**led**. (2006: 1).

My thesis fits more readily into the second category, being congruent with an emphasis which “highlights the insights, conceptualisation and theorisation which can arise when artists reflect on and document their own creative practice” (Smith and Dean, 2009: 5). However, it seems to me that “research-led practice”, a term employed by Smith and Dean (7) and by Jane Goodall (2009: 200), captures even more faithfully the essence of this project. For, although the novel stands up as a creative

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<sup>1</sup> This term is rejected by Candy and Edmonds on the grounds that it conflates two concepts – research and practice – which are interdependent but not interchangeable. However, “practice as research” is favoured by Nelson (2013), Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (2019) and Ludivine Allegue et al (2009), among others.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Natalie Loveless (2015).

writing work in its own right, its development drew heavily on the results of the research documented in Part One of this thesis.<sup>3</sup>

The point of departure for the project is provided by le Carré's remarks contained in the epigraph above.<sup>4</sup> He made them in an interview given to James Naughtie for the Today Programme, on BBC Radio Four, on 7 September 2017.<sup>5</sup> Hearing those remarks prompted me to think about what le Carré meant; what actually made a spy story "realistic"? Some preliminary research revealed that a relative paucity of critical attention has been paid to the genre and even less to that particular question. This was a surprising result: after all, spy stories, in fiction, in TV series, and on film have been immensely popular over many years. Hence, Leroy Panek remarks that "the spy novel has, in recent years, enjoyed unrivalled popularity" but adds that "in spite of this wide popularity, neither the critical nor the academic community has expressed much interest in the evolution or the craft of the spy novel" (1981: 1).<sup>6</sup>

Developments in the forty years or so since these critical comments on the genre were made mean that Panek would no longer be able to "tick off on one hand the books which deal, even tangentially, with spy fiction" (1981: 1).<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the shelves remain relatively bare. Although there are such seminal works in the field as those by Bruce Merry (1977), and John G. Cawelti and Bruce A. Rosenberg (1987), relatively little academic attention continues to be devoted to spy fiction given its importance in popular culture. The greatest number of texts, even those published more recently,<sup>8</sup> consist of analyses of one or more renowned spy fiction writer, such as Erskine Childers, Buchan, Somerset Maugham, Eric Ambler, Graham Greene, Fleming,

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<sup>3</sup> The relationship between practice and research is elaborated in Part Three, Section 4, "Reflections on an Original Contribution to Knowledge and Practice".

<sup>4</sup> These remarks echo those he had made in an unpublished 1968 US radio broadcast, in which he adopted a similar metaphor: "I believe that the romanticized vision of the spy which was presented by Fleming created a kind of hunger for something more realistic." (Tony Barley, 1986: 30).

<sup>5</sup> At that point, Naughtie, a renowned broadcaster and journalist, had recently published his own "realistic" spy novel, *Paris Spring*.

<sup>6</sup> This sentiment is shared by John Atkins, who remarks that "there has been very little critical work done on spy fiction. Most writers in this genre are not written about" (1984: 275).

<sup>7</sup> Nor would Atkins be able to count the books on the genre, apart from those on W. Somerset Maugham or John Buchan, "on one's fingers".

<sup>8</sup> See, for example Brett F. Woods (2008). A theme that has attracted some attention in more recent commentaries on spy fiction, is, as Maria Christou puts it, "the key role of the sovereign state in the genre" (2022: 277). See Michael Kackman (2005), Allan Hepburn (2005), Luc Boltanski (2014) and Sam Goodman (2016).

Len Deighton, and le Carré.<sup>9</sup> This thesis, on the other hand, while paying due attention to the major figures in the genre, also investigates the work of lesser-known writers. Moreover, while other recent spy novels, by such writers as Paul Vidich, Tim Glister, and Helen Dunmore, focus on the 1960s, which was a high point of the Cold War, encompassing such major events as the Bay of Pigs, The Cuban Missile Crisis, the beginning of the Vietnam War and the so-called Prague Spring,<sup>10</sup> *The Cossack Variation* is set in the 1980s. The latter period, in the aftermath of the collapse of détente, represented a fresh development in the conflict between East and West, sometimes characterised as the “New” or “Second” Cold War (Painter, 1999: 95-111). *Cossack* is loosely based on the exploits of Aldrich Ames, a CIA officer who spied for the KGB, and Ryszard Kuklinski, a high-ranking Polish army officer who provided vital intel to the CIA. Both were active in the 1980s.

Setting the novel in that period means that *Cossack* could be regarded as an historical novel. After all, it certainly meets the criteria of the fourth of H. Scott Dalton’s “standard” varieties of historical fiction, namely “Depictions of fictional characters in fictional situations, but in the context of a real historical period” (2006: 2/3). But, as Jerome de Groot points out, “the genre is a knotty one to pin down, including within its boundaries a multiplicity of different types of fictional formats” (2010: 3). Indeed, Gail McGrew Eifrig insists that “as a term, ‘historical fiction’” is “a troubled and troubling one” (1993: 237). Grant Rodwell illustrates the lack of consensus about a definition of the genre by counterposing Dalton’s formulation with a reference to the preferred definition of the Historical Novel Society in the USA. This requires that historical novels “have been written at least fifty years after the events described, or have been written by someone who was not alive at the time” (2013: 47). *Cossack* would fail on those grounds, as I began writing the novel less than forty years after the events I recount and was in my late twenties at the start of the period in which they “occurred”.

My thesis further diverges from much of the literature in the field in two major ways. Firstly, I concentrate on spy fiction dealing with the Cold War era, written either

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Lars Ole Sauerberg (1984), and Clive Bloom, ed. (1990).

<sup>10</sup> Of course, there were several spy novels set in the 1980s written contemporaneously, such as Tim Sebastian’s *The Spy in Question*, William Hood’s *Spy Wednesday*, Evelyn Anthony’s *The Defector*, Michael Hartland’s *Seven Steps to Treason* and part of Len Deighton’s Bernie Samson series.

contemporaneously or, as with my own novel, since the fall of the Berlin Wall. In my view, this period represents a Golden Age for spy fiction writing, both in terms of quantity and quality.<sup>11</sup> For example, both Fleming's James Bond stories and le Carré's earlier novels, including some of his most significant and popular works, were written during the Cold War,<sup>12</sup> which clearly exercised a profound influence on both writers. Moreover, it is in Cold War spy fiction writing that some of the key themes this thesis addresses, such as betrayal and treason, reach their apotheosis. The Cold War was played out in many theatres, involving numerous secret service agencies, but the conflict was at its sharpest in espionage terms between the Western Allies and the countries of the Warsaw Pact. Concentrating on the Cold War era brought the ancillary benefit of imposing practical limitations on the scope of the project.

Secondly, the aim of the thesis is first of all to investigate what is meant by the idea of the "realistic" Cold War spy novel, and then apply the results of that investigation to the creation of a Cold War spy novel. The distinction le Carré draws between his own work and Fleming's reflects the point of view of many critics of the spy fiction genre who identify, as Sam Goodman puts it, "two distinct varieties of espionage fiction" (2016: 10). The first variety, for which the Bond stories are the flagbearer, I characterise here, following Cawelti and Rosenberg, as the "heroic adventure" strand (1987: 46). That term harks back to the adventure story tradition of the nineteenth century from which the spy story emerged, while pointing towards the increased centrality of the secret agent as hero in post-WW2 spy fiction. The second, "realistic" variety, epitomised by le Carré,<sup>13</sup> seeks to downplay the glamour and excitement central to the "heroic

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<sup>11</sup> Hundreds of spy novels have been written about this period, most of them contemporaneously, but also a significant number more recently, and inevitably the quality is variable. But le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and the Karla trilogy, Greene's *The Human Factor*, Frederick Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal*, and the work of Deighton, Robert Littell, and Charles McCarry stand comparison with any spy fiction, before or since.

<sup>12</sup> As Norman Davies observes, there can be some debate about when the Cold War began (1996: 1109). I take it to have begun in 1946, the year that Stalin predicted that war between East and West was inevitable, and Churchill made his "Iron Curtain" speech, and ended in 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell.

<sup>13</sup> According to Adam Sisman, le Carré's biographer, Sir Dick White, sometime head, first of MI5, then of MI6, insisted le Carré had done the British secret service no favours in imputing to it "cynicism, betrayal, defeatism and lack of conviction" (2016: 255).

adventure” strand, offering on the contrary a bleak portrayal of a world where espionage is a routine, repetitive and frequently tedious job.<sup>14</sup>

That such a portrayal represents the reality of the work of secret service officers is confirmed by former CIA officer turned spy fiction writer, Charles McCarry. According to his obituarist Michael Carlson, McCarry described his ten years in the job as “a time of extreme boredom” (2019: 9)<sup>15</sup> and, surely, as Cawelti and Rosenberg insist, “novels must not be permitted to replicate boredom” (1987: 60). Such considerations prompt Goodman, in conversation with Mariella Frostrup on BBC Radio Four’s “Open Book” on 13 October 2019, to claim that not only does a spy novel not require a solid grounding in reality to be enjoyable, but “in fact that might be a barrier to good fiction”. Applying the results of my investigation into “realistic” spy fiction to the writing of a novel therefore runs the risk of falling into the trap highlighted by Goodall, herself a thriller writer. Given the nature of the genre, she argues, the elements I identify as underpinning the “realistic” approach are likely to prove formulaic. On that basis, attempting to treat them as “ingredients in a recipe for success” is likely to be detrimental to the production of a fluent narrative (2009: 200). The challenge, therefore, as former CIA officer Bill Rapp puts it, is for “thriller writers” to find “ways to engage the audience while creating a plausible world in which his or her characters must operate” (2017: para 6 of 6). As the title of his article – “Spy Games” – suggests, Rapp is actually concerned with spy fiction, conforming to the common practice of characterising espionage novels as thrillers. And thrillers are expected to feature drama and excitement, and above all, suspense. Accordingly, a key issue to be addressed in applying the results of my analysis to the creation of a Cold War spy novel is, to borrow Rapp’s subtitle, “The Difficulty of Creating Suspense While Keeping Spy Fiction Realistic”.

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<sup>14</sup> These terms, or variants thereof, are in common use in spy fiction criticism. Former Director of Australia’s Security Intelligence Organisation, Paul O’Sullivan, prefers to characterise the work of le Carré, Deighton et al, as “adult spy fiction”, and designates the choice between Fleming and le Carré as between “Gloss or Grit” (2010: 21, 23).

<sup>15</sup> Similarly, David Wise, writing about the CIA’s directorate of operations, says the work of its officers is generally humdrum, to do with pushing paper, reading reports and other administrative tasks. Hence, “on an average day James Bond would be bored in the DDO” (1988: 11). This point of view is also endorsed by Ted Allbeury: “Real-life espionage is boring. It has too little action and its victories are mainly from paper work, not valour” (1978: 167).

## Research Questions

These introductory reflections engendered a number of research questions which have been revised and extended as work on the project has progressed:

*RQ1. What is the scope and nature of spy fiction, and how might it be defined?*

Here, the issue is to do with setting out the contours of the field of study. Any analysis of “realistic” spy fiction must first attempt to determine the scope and nature of the genre.

*RQ2. How far does the established distinction between the “heroic adventure” and “realistic” strands of the genre stand up to interrogation?*

It is commonplace for critics to accept this distinction. It is therefore important to explore how far it withstands closer scrutiny.

*RQ3. What is meant by the “realistic” approach, and how does it relate to literary “Realism”?*

This is a key question and part of the *raison d’être* of this thesis.

*RQ4. What contribution does the reader make to the establishment of the “realistic” approach?*

Here, the question is to what degree is the reader's participation necessary to enable Cold War spy novel writers to create the fictional world central to that approach.

*RQ5. What are the key elements of the “realistic” approach as they feature in a wide range of Cold War spy novels?*

There are common tropes, techniques and devices employed by disparate writers to persuade the reader of the “realistic” nature of their spy fiction.

*RQ6. How are writers aiming to achieve a “realistic” approach able to inject the ingredients of suspense into their narratives?*

This addresses the issue of how dramatic tension may be engendered in order to engage the readership while nonetheless creating a plausible espionage world.

*RQ7. How far is it possible consciously to apply the key elements of the “realistic” approach to the writing of a “successful” Cold War spy novel?*

The point here is to test the proposition that applying the “formulaic” elements which underpin the genre is likely to prove detrimental to the production of a fluent narrative.

*RQ8. To what degree does the injection of the ingredients of suspense contribute to the achievement of “success”?*

This question links to RQ6 and RQ7 and involves a further reflection on the writing process.

*RQ9. To what extent does the creative writing process inform the Analytical Commentary, and vice-versa?*

The aim is to integrate theory and practice, in that the findings of the Analytical Commentary are applied to the Portfolio of Creative Writing, which will in turn inform the Analytical Commentary. The completion of this thesis will enable reflection on the interplay between the two.

## **Methodology**

The methodology was straightforward, consisting of four distinct, but complementary tasks:

(a) Engaging with the idea of a practice-related PhD

I attended the taught course on Practice Research on 06/11/19 presented by Dr N. Duffy and his Practice Research Group sessions in January 2020. Meanwhile I also read the leading texts in the field (e.g., Smith & Dean, 2009).

(b) Undertaking background reading for the creative writing portfolio.

There are three sources for this task:

- Accounts of real-life espionage during the Cold War (e.g., Simpson, 2013).
- Accounts of real-life double-agents, particularly Ryszard Kuklinski and Aldrich Ames (e.g., Weiner et al, 1995<sup>16</sup> and Weiser, 2004, respectively).
- Cold War spy novels by, e.g., Greene, le Carré, Deighton, Fleming, Littell, John Gardner, Anthony Price, Ted Allbeury, Brian Freemantle, Charles MacCarry,

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<sup>16</sup> For Ames, see also Peter Maas (1996), Sandra Grimes & Jeanne Vertifeuille (2013), James Adams (1995).

Julian Rathbone, Paul Vidich, Victor Marchetti, William Hood, W. T. Tyler, Alan Judd and E. Howard Hunt.

The last source was a primary mechanism, along with assessing feedback from supervisors and others, for honing the craft of writing. It was also essential for the Analytical Commentary, in that a detailed analysis of “realistic” Cold War spy novels requires a close reading of these texts. This is therefore an example of how the work on the Analytical Commentary and the Creative Writing Portfolio interact.

(c) Undertaking background reading for the Analytical Commentary.

There are four sources for this:

- Texts relating to literary criticism, particularly with regard to popular and genre fiction (e.g., McCracken, 1998; Palmer, 1978)
- Texts on the nature of “realism” (e.g., Furst, 1992).
- Critical analyses of spy fiction (e.g., Cawelti & Rosenberg, 1987).
- Cold War spy novels (as in (b) above).

(d) Upon completion of Part One of the Analytical Commentary, and the Portfolio of Creative Writing, reflecting on the writing process, the “success” of the novel, the degree of integration of the different parts of the project, and the original contribution of the thesis to knowledge and practice.

### **A Note on an Original Contribution to Knowledge and Practice**

At first sight it would seem that the Holy Grail of originality should be readily within reach of this project. After all, any novel, however formulaic, is inherently a unique piece of creative writing. Hence, Estelle Barrett insists that “*practice* is itself, productive of knowledge” (2019a: 9) and Donna Lee Brien that creative writing works are “stocks of knowledge” in themselves (2006: 53). However, as Robin Nelson points out, the fact that each creative iteration is distinctive only renders it original in a weak sense: “There is a significant difference between a fresh iteration of a creative practice and an original ‘academic’ research inquiry to yield new knowledge” (2013: 24). Moreover, *The Cossack Variation*, the novel that forms the centrepiece of this project, consciously draws on existing “realistic” Cold War spy fiction by a great variety of writers,



so *in that respect* does not so obviously make a contribution to new knowledge and offer fresh insights into practice as a more innovative or subversive approach might do.<sup>17</sup> It cannot, therefore, simply be assumed that *ipso facto* this project represents a significant original contribution to knowledge and practice; that case has to be made more explicitly. In so doing, a first step would be to interrogate the idea of what Nelson calls “new knowledge”. As he points out, “to set the bar ... at the level of the paradigm shift is to set the bar too high” (2013: 27). Similarly, Barrett cautions against “pomposity and the making of grandiose claims” (2019b: 195). She adds that “originality” is “often not easy to identify or articulate”, suggesting that the touchstone should be that “the project goes beyond what has already been done”. What is at issue, she argues, is the need for “small advances on previous ideas and practice”. How far and by what means this project achieves those small advances is the subject of detailed analysis in Part Three, Section 4.<sup>18</sup>

### **Structure**

The thesis is divided into three parts: One – Analytical Commentary I; Two – *The Cossack Variation*; Three – Analytical Commentary II. Part One provides the context for the novel that constitutes the portfolio of creative writing, reviewing the literature in the field and undertaking a detailed analysis of “realistic” spy fiction. Part Two presents the full-length novel, written in the light of the findings in Part One. Part Three allows for a process of reflection, reviewing the decisions made in the course of the writing process, and evaluating the interplay between the first two parts of the thesis.

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<sup>17</sup> The respects in which it does represent an innovative and subversive approach are discussed in Part Three, Section 4.

<sup>18</sup> I have chosen to term the subdivisions of the Analytical Commentary “sections” rather than “chapters” so as to avoid any possible confusion with the Portfolio of Creative Writing, which as a novel is naturally divided into chapters.



# **Part One**

*Analytical Commentary I*



## 1. The Scope and Nature of Spy Fiction

*“But there are spies, aren’t there – real spies?”*  
*“I suppose so, yes. Why do you ask?”*  
*“I just wanted to be sure that’s all...spies like 007?”*  
*“Well, not exactly.”*

(Greene, 1978: 58)

In an analysis of what is meant by “realistic” Cold War spy novels, an essential first step is to attempt to establish the contours of the genre. The starting point for this section is the general consensus amongst critics that spy fiction may be appropriately categorised as a sub-genre of crime fiction, broadly defined, or, at least, appropriately located on a spectrum with other elements of that genre.<sup>19</sup> Robin Winks, for example, writes that “Mystery, detective, and spy fiction are part of a clear continuum” (1993: 221). Both *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*, edited by Rosemary Herbert, and *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, edited by Martin Priestman, include contributions on spy fiction. In the latter volume, David Seed maintains that “The spy story is a close but distinct variation on the tale of detection with the difference that there is no discrete crime involved but rather a covert action” (2003: 115). Macmillan’s *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, edited by John M. Reilly, includes biographies of such noted spy fiction writers as Ambler, Deighton, le Carré, and McCary. *Mystery and Suspense Writers*, edited by Winks and Maureen Corrigan, features critical commentaries on Ambler, Buchan, Fleming, Green, le Carré, Robert Ludlum, and Helen MacInnes, as well as an article on the spy thriller. The doyen of crime fiction commentators, Julian Symons, devotes a chapter to spy fiction in his seminal work, *Bloody Murder*, as does Barry Forshaw in *The Rough Guide to Crime Fiction*, and it is briefly discussed in John Scaggs’ and Priestman’s short surveys of the genre, both entitled *Crime Fiction*. Scaggs points to “the legal thriller’s direct lineage from the spy thriller at the end of the Cold War” (2005: 120).

However, within this apparent consensus there are two prominent lines of contention. The first concerns what precisely is the relationship between spy fiction and other

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<sup>19</sup> It is instructive to note, for example, that the winner of the Theakston Old Peculier Crime Novel of 2022 was Mick Herron’s spy story, *Slough House*.

categories of crime fiction; the second relates to what kind of stories should properly be designated as spy fiction. These two lines of contention are the subject of the first two sub-sections here, while the third introduces a tentative definition of spy fiction.

### 1.1 Spy Fiction and Crime Fiction

*It would be absurd to consider John Buchan and Eric Ambler with R. Austin Freeman and Agatha Christie.*

— Symons (1992: 214)

That the relationship between spy fiction and the broader genre of crime fiction is a matter of contention is not surprising. While we may agree with Symons that “detective stories and crime novels are of a different strain from spy stories and thrillers”, and that no-one would confuse Ambler with Christie, we might also accept that “the lines of demarcation are uncertain” (1992: 214). That uncertainty is manifested most conspicuously in the connection critics make between spy fiction and detective fiction, which is taken to be a specific sub-genre of crime fiction more generally. Some of them agree with Seed in regarding the former as a close but distinct variation of the latter. John Gardner, for example, insists that an essential element of spy fiction is “a puzzle which is successfully unravelled by the end of each book” (1990: 8). Similarly, Atkins maintains that spy fiction inevitably contains a “mystery element”, albeit a mystery of a specialised kind: “*something is going on—but what?*” Hence, he argues that “If the crime story is Whodunit, the spy story is ... Howdunit” (1984: 15). Former head of MI5, Stella Rimington, dismisses this notion. Detective stories, she contends, involve “Who-dunnit?” and/or “Howdunit?”, whereas “a true spy story is not concerned with such matters” (2008: xiii), adding later that “the true spy story resembles real life as we all actually know it” (xix).<sup>20</sup> The inclusion of the adjective “true” is significant here: Rimington holds a particularly stringent view of what counts as spy fiction, as will be explored below.

An alternative perspective that leads to a similar conclusion about the distinction between spy fiction and detective fiction is proposed by Allan Hepburn. Hepburn allows that the former’s antecedents are to be found in early detective fiction and Victorian adventure stories. However, he insists that “spy fiction is not the same as

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<sup>20</sup> The idea that “true” spy fiction should have a quasi-mimetic relationship to real life is discussed in Section 3.

detective fiction". Whereas the former "is about codes", the latter "is about clues". Extrapolating from that observation, he goes on to say that "spy fiction is about hermeneusis ... and detective fiction is about exegesis".<sup>21</sup> Whereas codes require "decipherment as allegory", clues invite "literal reading in a linear order as realism" (2005: 25). In concrete terms, this distinction manifests itself in the way that significant tropes play out in the two literary forms. For example, "In detective fiction, death is requisite. There can be no detection without a corpse." While corpses may well feature in spy fiction, it is not inevitable that they do so: "They are incidental to narratives of intrigue" (26).

Hepburn's "bold distinction", as Robert Lance Snyder puts it, is certainly arresting, underscoring spy fiction's "elliptical and recursive pattern", which immerses the reader in "a discursive world of encrypted signification" (2011: 6). Intrigue, conspiracy, treacherous shades of grey (Scaggs, 2005: 119) are at their most overt in spy fiction. However, there are difficulties with the positions taken by Hepburn and Remington. Firstly, detective fiction does not necessarily foreground the discovery and interpretation of "clues". For example, in the hard-boiled private eye fiction tradition, exemplified by Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, and taken on more recently by Marcia Muller, Sarah Paretsky, Lawrence Sanders and others, "clues" may well feature, but they are seldom the principal focus of their narratives. Indeed, in his famous essay "The Simple Art of Murder", Chandler excoriates the detective mysteries of the Golden Age between the wars for sacrificing any purchase on the real world of crime, in order to perfect the puzzle-clue element of the story (1988). Hard-boiled fiction is not all of a kind, but typically the stories foreground the challenges faced by a principled detective, struggling to come to terms with a disordered world, while battling against malign, often corrupt, powerful corporations, the forces of law and order, and the criminal underworld.

In addition, as Scott McCracken observes, "in the 1980s and 1990s the [detective fiction] form has broadened to include critical perspectives on gender, sexuality and race" (1998: 71). In terms of race, there is, for example, a school of African American fiction, featuring what Stephen F Soitos calls "black detective personas" (1997: 182) in

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<sup>21</sup> Brenda R. Silver takes a different view, arguing that the "hermeneutic code" is "the dominant narrative code at work in spy or detective fiction" (1987: 22).

various historical periods. Writers of this school, while making “frequent references to crime fiction practices”, primarily focus on promoting black issues and undermining conventional detective stories (Stephen Knight, 2004: 195-96).<sup>22</sup> Further, post-modern detective fiction, exemplified by Paul Auster’s *New York Trilogy*, a “clever, sterile book”, according to Symons, plays “destructive games with the form of the crime story” (1992: 267). The three novels are recursive, enigmatic, unresolved – as far from “linear” as might be imagined. But they do feature a private detective, albeit one named “Paul Auster”. Knight also makes reference to feminist detective fiction by writers such as Sarah Schulman and Barbara Wilson which defy characterisation as clue-based, linear narratives. Wilson’s *Gaudí Afternoon*, for example, begins as “a standard amateur detective quest for a missing husband”, but morphs into indeterminacy, while exploring identity and gender roles (2004: 196-97).<sup>23</sup>

Wilson’s choice of title suggests an homage to Dorothy L. Sayers’ *Gaudy Night*, which in itself offers a corrective to Hepburn’s insistence that the detective novel demands at least one cadaver. There are many examples of detective fiction novels that do not include a death, instead featuring stalking, kidnapping, robbery, gang rivalry and so on. Robert B. Parker’s series of Spenser private eye novels is just one example where this is often the case. With *Gaudy Night*, we are safely on detective fiction ground, the protagonists of the novel being the Golden Age detective hero, Lord Peter Wimsey, and his soon-to-be-wife, Harriet Vane. The case they investigate, located at a fictional Oxford University women’s college, centres on a vicious poison-pen letter writer. There is some violence and possibly an attempted murder, but no actual deaths.

Nor does the characterisation of spy fiction implicit in Hepburn and Rimington stand up to scrutiny, even given the latter’s stringent criteria. While the novels of le Carré appear to meet these criteria, as Frederick P. Hitz notes, much of his work focuses on counterintelligence, which “is detective work, but of a highly specialised kind, focusing on operational detail in a secret world” (2004: 56). This is true not just of his first book,

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<sup>22</sup> Even “the most prolific black writer in crime and mystery fiction”, Chester Himes, rejected the conventional approach of detective narratives, paving the way for Ishmael Reed who “almost abolishes the detective formula” in his series featuring Papa LaBas, the head of a private detective agency (Soitos, 1997: 183).

<sup>23</sup> See also on subversive feminist detective fiction, Sally R. Munt (1994).



*Call for the Dead*, a blend of the two sub-genres, as Peter Lewis puts it, but also of several of the other books featuring George Smiley, particularly the Karla trilogy. The most renowned of them, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, is a Cold War story of espionage and betrayal, par excellence, but its primary focus resembles a classical detective plot as Smiley hunts for the mole at the top of the secret service. It is no coincidence that he chooses as his legman Oliver Mendel, a former police inspector. It is because of the work of le Carré and others in the “realistic” tradition that Lewis maintains there was a shift of emphasis in spy fiction, in that “detection often replaces adventure as a narrative basis” (1999: 428).

## 1.2 Identifying Spy Stories

*One of the difficulties in compiling a Who’s Who of Spy Fiction is that it is far from easy either to pin-point the beginning of the genre, or to define who is and who is not of this particular Band of Brothers.*<sup>24</sup>

— Donald McCormick (1977:1)

McCormick’s remarks reflect the second line of contention, namely the identification of what kind of stories, by which writers, should properly be designated as spy fiction. The problem arises partly because, as I suggested in the previous subsection, the boundaries are porous between spy fiction and detective fiction, and even more so in the case of crime fiction more generally. However, the debate is also driven by disagreement about the nature of espionage itself. One school of critics, taking what might be termed a purist approach, advocate a particularly strict view. As alluded to above, Rimington, for example, regards the business of espionage as confined solely to intelligence gathering. Her position echoes that of Kim Philby, for whom spying, properly construed, involves “the collection of secret information from foreign countries by illegal means” (1968: 49). There is some support for this position from history. According to McCormick, in ancient China the earliest conception of a spy was “one who peeps through a crack” (1977: 1). In this vein, Atkins asserts that “the three essential aspects of intelligence work have always been and remain the collection, collation and evaluation of material”. The job of the spy, therefore, “is to discover information in the shape of plans, reports, directives and so on” (1984: 108, 74).

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<sup>24</sup> Consciously or otherwise, McCormick’s use of the term “Band of *Brothers*” points up the masculine nature of much of spy fiction, a theme developed further below.

Cawelti and Rosenberg take a different view of “what it means to be a spy” (1987: 188). They argue that the modern-day spy’s repertoire has expanded enormously:

We now know that the secret agents of all nations . . . assassinate enemies, steal hardware of military and strategic importance from friendly nations and neutrals, manipulate political and public events, finance revolutions and nationalizations, make secret deals with the enemy, conduct counterinsurgency operations, as well as perform the more traditional tasks of gathering and evaluating intelligence data and uncovering the enemy’s agents (187).

Their analysis applies to all the world’s major secret service agencies, but a study of the CIA alone would bear out its accuracy. Paul Simpson, in describing what he designates as a “new form of spying” following the Second World War (2013: 45), refers, *inter alia*, to the CIA attempting to subvert communism in China and elsewhere; interfering in elections in Italy; sustaining the Shah of Iran in power; acting to overthrow elected regimes in Chile and Guatemala; initiating “Project MKULTRA”, which involved the development of biological, chemical and radiological materials; implementing “enhanced” interrogation techniques; and deploying U2 spy planes.

This dichotomy of opinion on the nature of real-world espionage is also reflected in the debate about the proper classification of spy fiction. There is some support for the stricter definition in spy fiction writing itself. For example, in Leon Uris’s *Topaz*, a Russian defector, Kuznetsov, tells agent Devereaux of the French SDECE that “Every intelligence service in the world suffers from the same thing. We go to abnormal lengths, expense and danger to obtain information” (1969: 43). It is on this basis that Rimington wishes to exclude Fleming and others from designation as writers of spy fiction. Such writers, she maintains, “shed any connection with intelligence gathering and bubbled up into a Hollywood cloud-cuckoo-land” (2008: xv). As for James Bond, she insists he is no spy, but just “a licensed killer with no mission but to destroy” (xii). Winks agrees, maintaining that “Fleming’s books are the first spy fiction utterly to romanticise the activity, that is, to become totally fiction”, while insisting that, “of course, James Bond is not, in fact, an intelligence agent, a spy”. Rather, he is sent out by the British Secret Service to carry out “wet jobs”, that is, assassinations. Like Rimington and Philby, Winks proposes that espionage consists in gathering up or analysing information, which Bond does not do: “he does not do what people in real life in intelligence do”

(1993: 228).<sup>25</sup> Snyder is equally dismissive, deriding Fleming's James Bond stories as "potboilers" which "have so caricatured the genre as to devalue its standing". Hence, they are no more than "parodies of the genre" (2011: 3, 21).<sup>26</sup>

Atkins (1984: 93) and McCormick both quote with approval Kingsley Amis's more sober judgement that Bond is more of a counterspy than a spy. McCormick goes on to say that, over the years, the espionage novel has come to foreground not just individuals clearly identifiable as spies, but also the protagonist who is "not doing any spying himself". For, in speaking of the spy story, "we are talking of spy-catchers as well as spies, of double and treble-agents as well as agents, of hired killers, of planters of misinformation ..." (1977: 26). Some of the most renowned examples of Cold War spy fiction could appropriately be classified as novels of counterespionage, including *Tinker, Tailor*, Deighton's *The Ipcress File*, and Greene's *The Human Factor*. Moreover, Atkins accepts that while on a purist reading of the nature of espionage, he should not include Fleming in his survey of British spy novels, not to do so would make it a "pointless exercise" (1984: 93). Even Rimington, somewhat ruefully, accepts that to debar Bond would be "almost a heresy". Indeed, she concedes that in "common parlance" the world of spies includes not only the intelligence-gatherers she favours, but also "the action-oriented secret agent" (2008: xii).<sup>27</sup>

This is surely correct. Spy fiction, as Merry contends, was "forged in response to political and social circumstances" (1977: 4). The threats from Germany before the First World War, the fear of anarchist and communist plots, and, of course, the imminence or actuality of the war against fascism supplied the backdrop to the spy fiction of the

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<sup>25</sup> Former Intelligence Corps officer, Ted Allbeury, insists that a James Bond type would not make a good intelligence officer: "Arrogant, pseudo-sophisticated and mentally ill-equipped, James Bond wouldn't get past the first selection filter" (1978: 167).

<sup>26</sup> Both Michael Denning (1987: 93) and Richard Bradbury (1990: 138) describe these tales as "fantastic", and not in the complimentary sense of that term. Similarly, Panek deems them "fantasies" (1981: 236). For Lars Ole Sauerberg they are "sensationalist" (1984: 8), for Simpson they are "over-the-top" (2013: 100), and for Symons they represent no more than "pipedreams" (1992: 225). Goodman (2016: 12) prefers the word "incredible", as does Seed, who insists Fleming wrote "basically incredible stories with a straight face" (2003: 125).

<sup>27</sup> Alan Furst wants to rename spy fiction as "*the literature of clandestine political conflict*" (orig. emph.), acknowledging that "you wouldn't want to pin that on a shelf in your bookstore". Nonetheless, he favours that description because "it may then include intelligence officers, secret agents, diplomats, secret police, special operations personnel, terrorists, interior ministers, detectives, political assassins, guerrillas, members of a national resistance, the eternally popular amateurs-caught-up-in-a-game-far-more-dangerous-than-they-can-understand, and even, a few spies" (2004: viii).

first half of the twentieth century. After the Second World War, spy fiction was dominated by the Bond novels whose popularity is attributable to their heady mix of luxury, sex, gadgetry and a suave hero, but also, as Priestman notes, to “the fears inspired by the ‘Cold War’ between East and West”. In particular, the threat of nuclear war loomed large, once the Soviet Union had developed the necessary technology, a capability acquired “precisely through spying” (2013: 45-6).<sup>28</sup> For purists, the activities of James Bond may have borne little similarity to the clandestine operations of real-life spies, but for the reading public, good triumphed over evil, as the hero thwarted the dastardly plots of foreign villains. Further, as its position as a world power declined, Bond’s continuing successes allowed the reader to maintain the illusion that the United Kingdom still mattered (Michael Woolf, 1990: 90-1; Gordon Corera, 2012: 5, 58). Bond’s iconic status as a spy is confirmed by the frequent cultural references to him, not least in other spy fiction stories, as is illustrated by the epigraph to this section, which records a conversation between Greene’s protagonist, Castle, and his son, Sam.<sup>29</sup> Bond films are still being made drawing mass audiences and the question of the identity of the next actor to play the role attracts widespread speculation.<sup>30</sup> In the “real” world, Corera begins his account of the SIS by recounting a story told by a former “C”, Chief of Service, about a young MI6 officer who on first meeting a local African tribal chief was greeted with the words, “Hello, Mr Bond” (2012: 1). According to Eric Haseltine, Charles Gandy, a senior engineer in the NSA, when asked by two CIA officers to “run an errand” for them in Moscow, replied that while it might have been fun to play the secret agent, “I’m *not* James Bond” (2020: 29).

As well as the “heroic adventure” story, exemplified by Bond, there is another strand of writing whose position in the spy fiction genre is contentious, namely what Cawelti and Rosenberg call the “assassination thriller”. In novels such as Braine’s *The*

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<sup>28</sup> It was not only the threat of nuclear conflict that influenced the highly strained relations between East and West. According to Brett F. Woods, Western Europe feared that a Soviet overland attack could overrun it in a week, too quickly for the USA to intervene effectively (2008: 102).

<sup>29</sup> Thus, Julian Rathbone, in *A Spy of the Old School*, has Cargill, his secret service officer, insist that the KGB did not indulge in “fireworks”, “for all James Bond *et al* would have you think so” (1984: 271); Sir Geoffrey Morgate, a key character in Braine’s *The Pious Agent*, has a full set of the Bond books on his shelf (1975: 84); in Allbeury’s *A Choice of Enemies*, an agent accuses a colleague having “a touch of the 007s” (1973: 75); in Warren Tute’s *The Tarnham Connection* a CIA agent says to the eponymous defector’s wife, “Let’s try and get away from 007 ideas if we can” (1973: 26); and so on.

<sup>30</sup> We should also note Bond’s appearance, as portrayed by Daniel Craig, accompanied by the Queen herself, in the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics

*Pious Agent*, or Derek Marlowe's *A Dandy in Aspic*, the narratives stray far from Rington's model of spies as intelligence gatherers. In the latter, though the (anti-) hero, Eberlin, is involved "in some passing of information", primarily he is an assassin, "trained to kill the secret enemies of the Soviet State" (1968: 43). More recently, Ludlum's Jason Bourne series features a CIA black ops operation, codename *Treadstone*, wherein sleeper agents ("cicadas") trained as high-functioning assassins are "reawakened" when required. On this side of the Atlantic, James Quinn's *Redaction* series, featuring "Gorilla" Grant, imagines an assassination unit in the SIS. Still, at least Eberlin, Bourne, Grant, and Braine's protagonist Xavier Flynn work for state secret service agencies, whereas the two novels that most famously epitomise the "assassination thriller" feature lone individuals on a mission to kill. In Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male*, the protagonist is on a personal mission to shoot a thinly-disguised Hitler, while the eponymous hitman in Frederick Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal* has been hired by the OAS to assassinate Charles de Gaulle. In neither case is espionage directly involved, though Symons argues that the former is close in spirit to the spy story (1992: 223), but both go some way to meeting Seed's criterion that in spy fiction there is covert, political action (2003: 115). Indeed, Seed picks out *The Day of the Jackal* as a prime example of a political thriller overlapping with espionage narratives. There is, for example, the involvement of the British secret services in the hunt for the Jackal, but in particular Seed draws attention to the centrality of intelligence to the narrative, which "as in spy fiction ... is a special kind of information which needs decoding". In this case, it is information about "the mysteries of bogus identities", which of course is a familiar trope in spy fiction (2003: 129).

McCormick describes *The Day of the Jackal* as "a new development in the spy story", characterising it as "a documentary spy thriller" (1977: 78). Similarly, Merry argues that Forsyth "draws on the standard resources of the spy thriller", in particular "using research and technical accuracy" (1977: 47-8). There is plenty of action in *The Day of the Jackal*, including attempts on the French President's life, the hunt for the Jackal, his "disposing" of potential witnesses, and the confrontation between him and his chief pursuer, Commissioner Lebel. But it is the painstaking description of the Jackal's methodology in establishing the bogus identities, and acquiring the props and accoutrements needed for his mission which helps explain its extraordinary success. In

the “realistic” spy fiction of writers such as le Carré, Deighton and Littell there is a similar portrayal of the minutiae of the operation of professional espionage. In particular, the building blocks of tradecraft – decoding messages, setting up dead drops, establishing a “legend”, surveillance and counter-surveillance<sup>31</sup> – are laid out in meticulous detail.<sup>32</sup> It should also be noted that, as Umberto Eco remarks, there is in Ian Fleming a “surprising” amount of detailed “descriptions of articles, landscapes, and events apparently inessential to the course of the story” (1981: 165). Indeed, Atkins claims that the popularity of the James Bond series can be partly explained by the remarkable attention to detail, for example, in the descriptions of weaponry: “Along with the incredibility of the action, went the heightened credibility of the detail” (1984: 75).<sup>33</sup>

### 1.3 Towards a Definition of Spy Fiction

*A spy story is a story in which the central character is a secret intelligence agent of one sort or another.*

— Ambler (1966: 20).

In the light of the lack of consensus about which stories to designate as spy fiction, it is hardly surprising either that Symons insists on the “slipperiness of identifying books as ‘spy’ stories” (1992: 217), or that Ambler is one of very few critics who actually attempt to define the genre, in his case in his introduction to the anthology of spy stories, *To Catch a Spy*. Even he offers his definition tentatively, recognising that it is “loose”, and that it would exclude his own work as well as the Graham Greene story he includes in the collection. The definition proposed by Cawelti and Rosenberg, namely, “a story whose protagonist has some primary connection with espionage” (1987: 5), invites a similar criticism. Not only would they thereby exclude most of Ambler’s works but also *Rogue Male* and *The Day of the Jackal*.<sup>34</sup> Equally, both definitions would also appear to exclude other works, which, to paraphrase Atkins, would readily be referred

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<sup>31</sup> Hitz defines tradecraft as “a catch-all term” for “the techniques adopted by spies to conceal their activities” (2005: 66).

<sup>32</sup> McCormick and Fletcher maintain that “The new thing in spy fiction became a passion for detail” (1990: 6). This line of inquiry is further developed in Section 5 below.

<sup>33</sup> Tom Clancy, arguably a primary inheritor of Fleming’s mantle, was also, according to Wesley K. Wark “noted for the technical detail that suffuses his novels” (1998: 1212).

<sup>34</sup> Cawelti and Rosenberg recognise that their definition might also embrace stories “which one would hesitate to call spy stories”, suggesting Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* as an example (1987: 5). More recently, John Banville’s *The Untouchables* features a double-agent, Victor Maskell (a thinly disguised Anthony Blunt), as its protagonist, but the narrative focuses less on his acts of espionage on behalf of the KGB and more on an account of his life, particularly his family relations and his wartime exploits.

to as spy novels by the reading public (1984: 275). A typical case in point is the series of espionage novels by Alan Furst, set in Europe before and during the Second World War. In a few of the books the protagonist is a professional secret service agent but in the majority it is someone caught up in the maelstrom of secrecy, conspiracy and intrigue of the times. In *The Foreign Correspondent* (2007), for example, Carlo Weisz is the eponymous journalist pursued by agents of the secret services of France, Italy and the UK. These difficulties are inherent in any process of attempting to define a genre. As Jerry Palmer puts it, discussing thrillers more generally, such a process “by grouping a number of texts, forces the exclusion of others”. On this basis, he goes on to wonder if the best definition of a genre might be “the kind of book found in that section of bookshops” (1978: 3).

Attempts to define spy fiction are further complicated by the attention paid to some of the genre’s practitioners by the wider literary world. This encourages Goodman, for example, to suggest that the work of Greene, Deighton and le Carré “breaks down the barriers of genre fiction” (2016: 12). Two different senses of the term “genre” are in play here. In speaking of the work of such writers, Goodman is arguing against its use in what might be a pejorative sense, such as when someone refers to “genre fiction”, potentially indicating its “formulaic and conventional” basis (John Frow, 2006: 1). Michael Denning defines the formula common to popular fiction as “a set of characteristic themes, stock characters, and conventional story patterns” (1987: 9). The supposed formulaic nature of spy fiction along these lines has led to adverse criticism by some literary critics. For example, Jacques Barzun derides “the literature of spying” as “light” and “trashy” (quoted in Snyder, 2011: 3-4). In defending spy fiction, Snyder follows Goodman in identifying skilled writers – Snyder similarly references Greene and le Carré, and adds Conrad and Ambler – who have transcended the boundaries of genre fiction. In this vein, Cawelti and Rosenberg insist that spy stories have moved back “into the main currents of what is simply good fiction”. In particular, le Carré has “made the spy story into one of the most important literary genres in the mid-twentieth century” (1987: 124, 157).

But the categorical denigration of a literary genre simply because it is deemed to be based on a “formulaic and conventional” structure is itself problematic. What is a recipe for a particular culinary dish other than a formula? Or the score for a piece of

music? Yet, we are hardly surprised if two chefs produce quite different results from the same recipe, or two conductors coax radically divergent interpretations of the same symphony from their orchestras. Palmer also employs the cookery analogy, similarly arguing that two cooks given the same ingredients are likely to produce dishes of wildly differing quality. Applying this analogy to thrillers, he contends that while the imitators of Ian Fleming might similarly include “a mixture of sex, violence, conspiracy and heroism”, it is Fleming’s ability to blend those elements in a certain way that explains his success. The superior quality of his work “is a question of complexity, a question of how intertwined, how interdependent, are the various strands that compose the narrative” (1978: 74, 77). In particular, echoing Atkins and Eco, Palmer notes the wealth of detail in Fleming’s stories.<sup>35</sup> Thrillers might appear to be “monotonously predictable”, but the appreciative reader “makes the effort of imagination necessary to enter the world that the thriller proposes”. Hence, writing a “good” thriller depends on “capturing the reader’s imagination” (69, 80).<sup>36</sup> Notwithstanding Denning’s prescription that at the heart of the spy fiction genre are “adventure formulas and the plots of betrayal, disguise and doubles” (1987: 2), the scope for variety, innovation, excitement and surprise remains vast. As Gardner remarks, “the permutations of the Novel of Espionage are endless” (1982: 79).<sup>37</sup>

The second sense of “genre” represents what Frow calls “a universal dimension of textuality” (2006: 2). McCracken fleshes this out in the context of writing about popular fiction, contending that genre “refers to particular formal characteristics that define a work of literature as belonging to a particular group that shares those characteristics” (1998: 12). We have seen that Denning tries to give substance to those characteristics, as do other critics, referring sometimes to conventions, rules or motifs. Dudley Jones offers a brief exposition of the conventions, listing “the swift pace of the story,

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<sup>35</sup> Palmer goes on to credit the success of Mickey Spillane and Raymond Chandler to the unflagging pace in the former’s books and the seam of irony that runs through the latter’s (1978: 77, 79).

<sup>36</sup> Palmer’s formulation foreshadows the argument I make later on in this thesis that spy fiction writers seek to engage their readers’ “sympathetic imagination” so that they will participate in the fictional world they create (Section 3.3). It also calls to mind Christopher Booker’s contention that the reason that readers are able to derive infinite variety from the “small number of plots which are so fundamental to the way we tell stories” is “our ability to ‘imagine’, to bring up to our conscious perception the images of things which are not actually in front of our eyes” (2005: 6, 3).

<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Rosie White contends that “spy fictions are particularly elastic; there are certain formulae, yes, but an infinite range of combinations and readings to be made from those formulae” (2007: 3).



the convoluted plot, the dramatic set pieces” (1996: 108). Cawelti and Rosenberg, on the other hand, set out five “plot types” and twenty-three “characteristic episodes (motifs)” (1987: 219). Snyder lists eight features which define the genre (2011: 5-6). However, Goodman’s point, following Mark Jancovich, was that spy fiction should not be regarded as a coherent and hermetically sealed literary form. It does not constitute, he asserts, “a self-contained genre” (2016: 12). Support for this view comes from McCracken, who maintains that “genre boundaries are never absolutely fixed”. Attempts to define a popular fiction genre, therefore, “are not likely to be final, but temporary statements about the ongoing development of a form” (1998: 12).

While statements about the nature of spy fiction may thus be transitory, that does not mean we cannot identify conventions, motifs or elements – or to introduce the term I prefer, *dimensions* – that are characteristic of spy fiction at particular points in its development. “Dimensions”, it seems to me, captures the idea that what is at issue is the scope and scale of the genre, together with the variety of aspects that characterise it. Thus, in the early years, as Jones notes, while the focus of spy stories was on the external enemy – Germany, for example – whose malefactions were blunted by the heroic individual British agent, subsequent iterations have shifted their attention to “the enemy within” (1990: 100).<sup>38</sup> Over time, spy fiction has found room for the adventure story, the action thriller and the slower, more cerebral, process of investigation. As Atkins observes, in typically flamboyant style:

At one end we have blondes and automatics and invisible inks and poisoned drinks and underwater death struggles; at the other end we have political discussions and Marxist dialectics and historical hypotheses and ‘plateau’ thinking (1984: 17).

None of the dimensions in the following discussion are immutable, quintessential or unique to spy fiction. But all have featured strongly in the history of the genre, more so in some periods than others. Seed’s insistence on the political undertones of spy fiction, referred to above, is surely right. Fascism, Nazism, the Cold War, and international terrorism are recurrent themes and protagonists and/or antagonists are frequently agents of one state or another. Even in a relatively recent novel, le Carré’s *The Constant Gardener*, where, on a narrow construction at least, there is no overtly

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<sup>38</sup> This idea is further explored in Section 5.

political context, the “villain” of the piece being big pharmaceutical companies, and the protagonist acting in a private capacity, there is a subtext involving corrupt politicians in the UK and Africa. Moreover, it would be otiose to suggest that massive private corporations somehow act outside the political arena.

A novel like *The Constant Gardener* suggests some of the other dimensions at issue. Returning to Ambler’s putative definition of spy fiction, there is one aspect which does connect to le Carré’s novel, as well as other works apparently excluded from it, and Ambler’s own oeuvre: secrecy. For Clive Bloom, spying is inherently “played out in a twilight world of secrecy” (1990:3) and Woolf concurs that it is the “very ambiguity implicit in the notion of secrecy” that locates le Carré and Fleming in the same tradition (1990: 88). Correspondingly, Cawelti and Rosenberg devote an entire chapter to the “Appeal of Clandestinity”. Not that spy fiction is alone in cloaking its narratives in a miasma of secrecy. It is common enough in crime fiction of various kinds, but in spy fiction, as in the real world of secret agents, it is embedded in the very fabric of the operation of espionage. Victor Marchetti and John D Marks observe that “secrecy is unquestionably needed to protect the actual workings of the system” (1976: 238). As MI5 agent Richard Knox says in Tim Glister’s *A Loyal Traitor*, ‘Everything we do is secret’ (2022: 165). Charles Neve, in Robert McCrum’s *In the Secret State*, insists, with “unusual force”, that ‘The security’s obsessive. Everything, even the smallest detail, is secret. And the reasons for the security are secret. Secrecy is the lowest common denominator in our work’ (1981: 145).

A third, closely-related dimension is what Marty Roth calls “a conspiracy of deception”. Again, this is not unique to spy fiction, featuring significantly in crime fiction more generally, but as Roth goes on to say, “the spy thriller is the most overtly conspiratorial” (1995: 226). In le Carré’s *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, for example, the whole narrative is founded on a conspiracy hatched by MI6 to protect their asset, Mundt, a senior Stasi officer and ex-Nazi, while framing as a double agent Mundt’s Jewish colleague, Fiedler. The web of deception catches not only Fiedler, but also the Secret Service agent, Alec Leamas, who believes his mission is to discredit Mundt, and it also ensnares Leamas’s naïve communist girlfriend, Liz Gold. *The Day of the Jackal*, as we have seen, involves an OAS conspiracy to assassinate the President of France.

This third dimension points the way to a fourth. As noted above, Denning insists that at the heart of the genre are “plots of betrayal, disguise and doubles” (1987: 2). Throughout history there have been traitors and treachery, and this has been reflected in the development of spy fiction. But the Cold War shone a penetrating light on acts of treason, through the actions of, among others, the Cambridge Five in the UK, Aldrich Ames, Robert Hanssen and Edward Lee Howard in the USA, and defectors and double agents from the Warsaw Pact countries, such as Oleg Gordievsky, Anatoliy Golitsyn and Ryszard Kuklinski. For spy fiction of this period, as Jones notes, “the central theme became, and remained, betrayal” (1990: 101).<sup>39</sup> Leamas and Gold are betrayed by the Secret Service; the Jackal stays one step ahead of Commissioner Lebel because the latter’s investigation is betrayed to the OAS by a high-ranking government official, albeit unwittingly; real-life traitors, particularly Kim Philby, appear in numerous spy stories; and so on. Indeed, Cawelti and Rosenberg maintain that the more “realistic” school of spy fiction, exemplified by le Carré and Deighton “has become increasingly *obsessed* with the themes of loyalty, betrayal and double agency” (1987: 29, *emph. added*).

Even if treason itself is not the subject of a given spy novel, deception in one form or another suffuses the genre. Again, deception is not a feature unique to spy fiction, let alone to the more “realistic” variety, but it is absolutely central to it. As Luc Boltanski remarks, “the possibility of duplicity gives rise to radical uncertainty about the actions, the intentions and even the identities of the principal actors” (2014: 122). In Reginald Hill’s *The Spy’s Wife*, the eponymous Molly is trying to come to terms with the fact that her husband, Sam, has betrayed his country and is being called a traitor. If she is unsure on where she stands on that earthshattering revelation, she is quite certain about her attitude to their relationship: however she tries to explain his actions, she cannot escape the belief that everything he’d done “involved him in deceits”; she can’t imagine any scenarios “in which he would not have cheated her” (2006: 66-7). In the same vein, for Guy in Hone’s *The Sixth Directorate*, Helen’s treachery towards her country takes second place to her betrayal of him: ‘It was such a good, proud thing wasn’t it? – deceiving me’ (2009: 252). His fellow intelligence officer, Marlow, echoes Guy’s sense of priorities: ‘Our business is all a lot of silly nonsense anyway ... personal

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<sup>39</sup> Paul O’Sullivan claims that “the themes of trust, loyalty and betrayal are common to all types of spy fiction” (2010: 21).

commitment is far more important' (256). Former agent for the "Firm", Sue Ashweald, in John Lear's *Death in Leningrad*, encapsulates the nature of that "business": 'a profession that sets itself above the laws of its own, or any country – a profession which sees dishonesty and deceit as positive virtues' (1986: 73).

Boltanski maintains that it is this element of deception, the creation of shifting realities, in spy novels, along with detective fiction, which dramatizes anxiety, stirring it up in readers and thus "producing the particular excitement called suspense" (2014: 18). The crucial importance of suspense-through-deception in the DNA of "realistic" spy fiction is exemplified by its most renowned character, George Smiley. If the reader cannot trust le Carré's ageing, professorial protagonist, then whom can she trust? Yet, Smiley's career is a case study in deception. Throughout, the infidelities of his wife Ann act as a metaphor for the life of the spy, shot through as it is by "dishonesty and deceit". The web of deceit at the heart of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* has already been noted above; the salient point here is that although the plot is hatched by Control, Smiley is also deeply implicated and it is he who duplicitously enlists Liz Gold to the cause. The subsequent capture of Karla is only possible because of another web of deceit woven by Smiley.<sup>40</sup>

Often enough, as Symons implies, we will recognise spy fiction when we see it (1992: 214). There are many novels featuring professional secret service officers conducting clandestine activities to gather intelligence about, or thwart the operations of, rivals or enemies. However, the sweeping social changes and momentous international events that have occurred in the two centuries since James Fenimore Cooper published *The Spy* in 1821, widely regarded as the first spy story, are reflected in the historical development of the genre. From adventure stories, to heroic romances, to war-time tales of derring-do, to claustrophobic Cold War intrigues, to action thrillers and beyond, spy fiction has mutated and adapted in response to the changing circumstances of the time. Not even an apparently straightforward criterion to distinguish spy fiction, such as Cawelti and Rosenberg's, captures the full array of candidates. Nor are any of the dimensions I propose – a political context; secrecy; conspiracy; deception, and betrayal – sufficient in themselves or necessary collectively to define the genre. It

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<sup>40</sup> The crucial role of creating suspense in the "realistic" spy novel is discussed in Part One, Section 5 below, and further explored in Part Three, Section 3.

remains fluid and contested – slippery, to quote Symons again. However, the dimensions I have elaborated do point the way to a constructive discussion of the scope and nature of spy fiction.

## 2. Two Strands of Spy Fiction

*Our objective is illumination; the purpose . . . is not to make classification easy but to promote insight into the sometimes complex and subtle character of particular works.*

(Kendall L. Walton, 1990: 121)

As the previous section has shown, definitively pinning down the scope and nature of spy fiction is problematic, because of the variety and ever-changing shape of the works that have claims to be included in the genre. Nonetheless, as suggested in the Introduction, there exists a broad consensus that two opposing strands may be identified. This distinction is important, because it offers a preliminary insight into how “realistic” Cold War spy fiction might be characterised.

### 2.1 The “Heroic Adventure” v the “Realistic” Strands

The “heroic adventure” strand has its origins in the work of such writers as Rudyard Kipling, William le Queux, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Erskine Childers and Buchan. From the turn of the last century onward, spy fiction became an increasingly important form of popular fiction, with the secret agent as heroic protagonist. Erskine Childers’ *The Riddle of the Sands* stands out among the early contributions to this burgeoning canon as one of the first works of spy fiction, as McCormick puts it, “to have any pretensions to being literature” (1977: 46). It serves as a bridge between nineteenth century adventure novels with their often “boys’-own-story” overtones and the new twentieth-century heroic spy stories.<sup>41</sup> If Childers broke the ground for the construction of the modern spy story, then, a decade later, Buchan continued the process of synthesising the nineteenth-century traditions of adventure fiction with elements of espionage. Buchan was to publish, with *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, as Cawelti and Rosenberg put it, the “first spy story classic” (1987: 229).

Characteristic of this strand, particularly as imagined by Fleming, his imitators, and others who followed in the same vein, such as Ludlum and Clancy, were its moral absolutes, featuring heroic protagonists<sup>42</sup> pitted against egregious villains, accentuated by

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<sup>41</sup> Indeed, arguably *The Riddle of the Sands* also foreshadows the “realistic” strand, at least as Childers himself saw it. According to A. Norman Jeffares, what he aimed at “was not ‘sensation’, but convincing fact” (1980: 304).

<sup>42</sup> O’Sullivan argues that “no-one personifies the heroic individual as boldly, brashly, and as downright sumptuously as 007” (2010: 21).

high-octane violent action sequences, flamboyant sexual escapades and high-tech gadgets. Gardner, who has a foot in this camp as one of several purveyors of post-Fleming Bond adventures, neatly sums up these stories as “kiss-kiss bang-bang thrillers” (1989: 8). Typically, the “heroic adventure” strand, as the name suggests, focuses on a protagonist who may not have superhuman powers, but is nonetheless far from an ordinary man or woman (almost invariably, the former).<sup>43</sup> He is generally a braver, morally superior individual, more talented and a better shot than his opponent, and often irresistible to women, at least in his own mind.

The origins of the “realistic” strand may be traced back to Joseph Conrad, whose *The Secret Agent* was released in between the publication of *The Riddle of the Sands* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Conrad’s novel, together with Somerset Maugham’s *Ashenden* stories, paved the way for the work of Ambler and Greene, who were to transform the spy story from a heroic adventure into a more complex narrative, providing a more sober and sophisticated account of conflicting loyalties, betrayal and conspiracy. Apart from le Carré, the early heirs to this tradition include Deighton, Francis Clifford, McCarry, and Littell. Critics generally characterise their work as a robust reaction to the “heroic adventure” tradition. For example, in an echo of the writer himself, David Stafford observes that le Carré’s *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* “was widely greeted as injecting a welcome note of realism into spy fiction after a decade of Bond” (1989: 199). Indeed, according to William Boyd, le Carré brought about “a paradigm shift in the genre” (2010: para 7 of 13).<sup>44</sup> As already noted, rather than portraying a world of glamour and excitement, the “realistic” strand typically presents spying as a down-to-earth, almost run-of-the-mill occupation. In contradistinction to the “heroic adventure” strand, the intention is precisely to stress the ordinariness of the work of the intelligence services. As Skip Willman puts it, “What truly distinguishes le Carré from Fleming ... is how he frames intelligence work as pure mundanity – reviewing reports, digging through personnel files, and conducting interrogations – rather than as

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<sup>43</sup> A prominent exception is Peter O’Donnell’s Modesty Blaise series, its heroine, according to Jeff Banks, “conceived as a ‘female James Bond’” (1980: 1128).

<sup>44</sup> Simpson calls the more realistic approach a “backlash” (2013: 100), Wark a “riposte” (1998: 1208) and Woolf, a “counterversion” (1996: 87); Max Read asserts that le Carré’s George Smiley is “the anti-James Bond” (2017: 2), as does James Parker (2011), Lewis that le Carré’s *Call for the Dead* is “the antithesis of Bond in every respect”, and Gardner that the early Deighton books “seem to be the complete antithesis of the Bond novels (1982: 75).

adventures filled with sex and violence in exotic locales” (2022: 104). Further, as Willman goes on to point out, le Carré’s George Smiley is a bureaucrat, not an action man, and the same could be said for other writers’ protagonists, such as Anthony Price’s David Audley and Deighton’s Bernie Samson. These men are undoubtedly much cleverer than average, but are otherwise unremarkable.<sup>45</sup>

There are other clear differences between the paradigm expressions of the two strands. Denning, for example, argues that the Bond novels represent a radical discontinuity from the spy fiction that preceded them – notably Somerset Maugham, Greene and Ambler – which embodied “a more convincing code of realism” (1987: 93). That discontinuity is amplified when the comparison proceeds to encompass the work of le Carré and other more recent exponents of the “realistic” approach. In the first place, while, as George Grella puts it, Fleming created “novels of action and adventure, sex and violence” (1980: 571), there is relatively little of these things in le Carré; rather, as William Boyd points out, “the narrative is cerebral, intellectual” (2011: 34). Further, there is often a glaring disparity in the choice of location, as Goodman observes:

Instead of the privileged environs of Jamaica or the resorts to be found in Fleming’s work, the majority of narrative events in Deighton’s or le Carré’s novels are largely enacted in office buildings, down-at-heel areas of London or drab suburban environments (2016: 11).<sup>46</sup>

In addition, the “heroic adventure” strand takes a much more simplistic line on the moral implications of espionage, still sticking to what John Gardner calls “the old Hollywood Western maxim that the good guys wore white hats while the bad favoured black” (1982: 72). In *Casino Royale*, Bond tells French secret agent, René Mathis, that, when young, “it’s easy to pick out one’s own villains and heroes and one grows up wanting to be a hero and kill the villains” (2002: 158). It should be noted, however, that Bond also tells Mathis that distinguishing between right and wrong became more difficult as one got older. He goes on to explain that ‘The villains and heroes get all mixed up’, though ‘patriotism comes along and makes it seem fairly all right’ (159). On

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<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, Deighton’s anonymous hero of *The Ipcress File* series, and Smiley’s sidekick, Peter Guillam are sometimes men of action.

<sup>46</sup> In fact, this is less true in the case of Deighton, who in *The Ipcress File* alone shifts the action from London to Lebanon and an island in the Pacific. Moreover, many contributions to the “realistic” approach switch the action from London to another European capital, pivotal in the development of the Cold War, such as Moscow, and, in particular, Berlin, that cauldron of intrigue after the Second World War.



the other hand, the “realistic” strand is unequivocally characterised by moral ambiguity, on two fronts. Firstly, particularly with le Carré, it is uncertain whether the security services of the West have any greater claim to moral approbation than those of the Communist Bloc.<sup>47</sup> According to Allbeury, author of a dozen or so spy novels, in “the real-life recruitment of intelligence officers” it is considered better to employ “men who feel some doubts about the morality of what they are doing” (quoted in H. R. F. Keating, 1980: 26). Secondly, whereas in the “heroic adventure” tradition, the threat to the forces for good comes almost exclusively from without, that is from foreign governments and international agents, as was noted in the previous section, the “realistic” strand shifts the focus to the “enemy within”, that is, the mole, the defector, the double agent.

## **2.2 An Alternative Perspective**

Yet, notwithstanding these obvious discontinuities between the two strands, to insist on a strict bifurcation is too stark. It is useful as an heuristic tool, particularly in understanding the mindset and intentions of le Carré, Deighton and other exponents of the “realistic” approach, but I maintain that the idea of a spectrum more effectively captures the diversity of spy fiction writing. In the previous section I discussed the problematic nature of the kind of formulation favoured by Philby, Rimington and Winks, in which espionage is properly restricted to gathering and analysing intelligence. Corera points out that since the Second World War, British intelligence activity can best be understood as a balance “between covert action and intelligence gathering”.<sup>48</sup> This is surely also true of the United States, given the clandestine interventions of the CIA in Chile, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, the Congo, Iran, Guatemala, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos and so on. Corera goes on to maintain that at the start of the Cold War the British secret services were not so very different from James Bond’s fictional life: “There may not have quite been a formal licence to kill, but stealing, breaking the law, overthrowing un-

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<sup>47</sup> A notable exception according to John Gray is Deighton, who recognises the morally dubious nature of the spy business but does not accept the ethical parity of East and West (2021: 42). There is also the case of William F. Buckley Jr, who, as Wark puts it, wanted to show “that the CIA was the good guys and the KGB the bad” (1998: 1211). Buckley, a former CIA agent himself, epitomises the difficulty in consigning an author to one of the two categories at issue here, a problem discussed in the next sub-section.

<sup>48</sup> Le Carré once wrote that MI6 “was trying to do what the Reds were doing to us: subvert, seduce and penetrate” (quoted in Sisman, 2016: 195).

friendly governments and parachuting agents behind enemy lines was standard fare” (2012: 4).<sup>49</sup> Deighton is undoubtedly established as the “anti-Bond” but I would argue that this reputation, forged with the publication of the *Ipcress File* and its sequels, did not depend on the greater verisimilitude of those stories. Rather, it was more the product of the comparison between the suave, sophisticated, urbane hero of Ian Fleming’s tales and the working-class misfit from Burnley created by Deighton.

The difficulty in assigning any given spy fiction novel to one strand or the other is further exemplified by Braine’s *The Pious Agent*, briefly referred to in Section 1, where it was characterised as an “assassination thriller”, featuring as it does one Xavier Flynn, hired because the Director of Counter Espionage is on the lookout for “killers” (1975: 12). Flynn passes his audition with flying colours, dispatching a Chinese spy with a Colt 45 within five seconds (17). As his career progresses, he can lay claim to killing fifty Russians and “various odds and sods”, possibly including John F. Kennedy (64, 24). There are substantial action sequences throughout: Flynn engages in a knife-fight to the death; a bomb explodes at a factory, causing the death of four workers; an agent is killed in a “car accident”; the deputy manager of the factory is abducted, ending up with Flynn killing the kidnapper and his driver; and a traitor, codenamed “Aslan” is shot to death (though not by Flynn). There is also plenty of sex.<sup>50</sup>

All this, together with the fact that Flynn drives a fast car – a souped-up mini – very much smacks of what Winks calls “*jamesbonderie*” (1993: 232). Indeed, there are several knowing references to Fleming’s hero. For instance, the kidnapper, Chambers, warns his victim not to try to escape: ‘Please don’t see yourself as the hero of a thriller.

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<sup>49</sup> Michael Smith, on the other hand, maintains that the intelligence services insist that their work is nothing like the portrayal of Bond in the films, claiming that “most intelligence officers sit behind desks, never using a gun and certainly not living a life of glamour, seducing foreign spies and drinking cocktails (whether shaken or stirred)” (2019: 15). As Smith notes, this is misleading if not actually disingenuous. In the first place it elides the distinction between “officers”, who may well spend much of their working lives behind a desk, and “agents”, who are out in the field. Secondly, the use of weapons is not unknown in the world of espionage, nor is the employment of seduction as a strategy. It should also be noted that, inevitably, the films highlight the more sensational aspects of the Bond stories.

<sup>50</sup> We are told at the time of his induction that Flynn lost his virginity to a neighbour’s wife, at the age of fourteen, and that he currently “has it off regularly with a Colonel’s wife in Camberley”. In the course of the narrative, he has sex with various women, including Vanessa, daughter of the factory owner, who is apparently turned on by the fact that he is a killer (101). Not that he seems necessarily to need that advantage, given the foolproof chat-up line he employs: ‘I talk gently to them for a moment, then say, “*Let’s go upstairs and have a fuck*”. It never fails’ (23).

James Bond might get out of this situation, but you won't' (128). Yet, Braine also employs devices and tropes commonly associated with a more "realistic" approach, in an attempt to persuade the reader that the more extravagant aspects of the narrative are part of an authentically-realised world of a professional secret service. Firstly, in an echo of Deighton, the novel opens with an exchange of "memos" between senior figures in the British security establishment, and Braine employs this quasi-documentary style at various points throughout the narrative. Secondly, there are numerous references to real-life people, not only Kennedy, but also Philby, and Burgess and Maclean. Thirdly, there are examples of tradecraft – the nuts and bolts of espionage work – such as the fact that "code names ... were always used in official meetings" (164). Fourthly, there are examples of jargon or technical language specific to the world of espionage. Thus, an assassination is known as a "wet job" (174). Fifthly, there are detailed descriptions of equipment and hardware; for example, when Flynn arrives at headquarters in London, the guard at the gate is armed:

The Smith and Wesson 38 Special in the holster at his waist was loaded with Special Hi-Speed with a striking energy of 460 foot pounds, and a muzzle velocity of 1175 feet per second, which added up to a hole the size of a man's fist if you were hit (47).

Sixthly, notwithstanding the action-adventure passages, often involving engagement with external enemies, underpinning the narrative is the threat to the service of an enemy from *within*, the dawning realisation that somewhere in the organisation is a leak. The Chairman of the Security Council agrees with Flynn that there should be no euphemistic brushing of that fact under the carpet: 'Traitor. Yes, that's a good word, Xavier. Never mind about going double. Let's say traitor' (214). Seventhly, despite the fact that Flynn is primarily charged with carrying out "wet jobs", he insists, with a shrug, in answer to a question from a police inspector following the killing of the traitor, Aslan, that 'It's a job', although he does have the grace to allow that it's 'A nasty rotten job' (238). Finally, there is some serious debate about the moral nature of espionage, at least inside Flynn's head. While sipping some champagne, which was of course too dry because the French kept the best stuff for themselves, he muses that the Department's indoctrination boiled down to the idea that "you defended the bad against the infinitely worse" (91). This tone of what Flynn regarded as "cheerful cynicism" may also be discerned in a remark by the Director of Counter-Espionage: 'I want people

who'll basically be idealists, believing that they're serving the people even if, to quote the old saying, they're serving them like a bull serves a cow' (20). The police inspector has a more straightforward view: 'You people have rules all of your own, don't you?' (238).<sup>51</sup>

The previous section intimated that even the James Bond stories follow this path up to a point. Atkins goes as far as to maintain that "It is this compulsive detail . . . that accounts for the fascination Fleming exerted on his readers". Whether the latter point is true or not, there is no denying Fleming's "almost paranoid" eye for detail (1984: 74-5). For example, in *Casino Royale*, we soon learn of Bond's tradecraft, as he returns to his hotel room for the first time:

Then he bent down and inspected one of his own black hairs which still lay undisturbed where he had left it before dinner, wedged into the drawer of the writing desk. Next he examined a faint trace of talcum powder on the inner rim of the porcelain handle of the clothes cupboard. It appeared immaculate. He went into the bathroom, lifted the cover of the lavatory cistern and verified the level of the water against a small scratch on the copper ball-cock (2002: 7-8).

Indeed, Bond tells himself that he was still alive "thanks to his exact attention to the detail of his profession". This includes a well-developed cover-story as "a Jamaican plantocrat [sic] whose father ..." (25). Inevitably, given that, according to Atkins, the only other writer who could challenge the degree of detail about firearms provided by Fleming is the Western author, J. T. Edson, there is a longish paragraph, not only describing the kind of gun Bond carried – "a very flat .25 Beretta automatic with a skeleton grip" – but also how he tested the weapon before loading it, the type of shoulder holster he favoured, and how he wore the holster (59).

However, much of the detail does not relate directly to the peculiar business of espionage.<sup>52</sup> Grella satirises what Bond describes as "a habit of taking trouble over details" (64): "We are told more than we could ever want to know about cars, weapons, resort hotels, casinos, private clubs, high-stakes card games, skindiving, jewellery, perfume, hairbrushes, shampoos, colognes, luggage" (1980: 572). Nonetheless, he does

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<sup>51</sup> These tropes and devices are more fully discussed in Section 5.

<sup>52</sup> For example, Bond gives precise instructions to the hotel bartender on how to prepare his particular version of a dry martini, which he is going to name "the Vesper" (52-3), after Vesper Lynd, whom he subjects to a long lecture on the mechanics of the card game baccarat (70-4). We learn every detail of what they eat for dinner and the wines chosen to accompany their meal (62-3).

allow that Fleming's minute attention to detail "supports his essentially implausible works with a special sort of surface authenticity". Atkins takes the same view: "Along with the incredibility of the action went the heightened credibility of the detail" (1984: 75).<sup>53</sup>

Arguably, *Casino Royale* is one of the least fantastic of the Bond novels, but even its plot strains credulity. Bond is given ten million francs by the British secret service to defeat and bankrupt a Soviet Agent, Le Chiffre, at baccarat, with the CIA and the French Deuxième Bureau watching on. He escapes several attempts on his life, at one point hurtling through an empty window frame to the pavement, the glass having been blown out by an explosion. This is not an action one could readily imagine George Smiley undertaking (though his protégé, Peter Guillam, might well have done). As Corera observes, there is a marked distinction between Bond's "insistence on *doing* things", compared to Smiley "with his desire to *understand* things" (2012: 4). After the card game, described in great detail, Le Chiffre kidnaps Bond and subjects him to torture in a scene that lasts virtually a whole chapter. Bond's life is only saved by the intervention of a SMERSH assassin, who kills Le Chiffre. Afterwards, Bond contemplates marriage to Vesper Lynd but she commits suicide, leaving a note for him revealing she was a double agent.

Yet, the plots of spy novels by authors generally identified as exemplifying the "realistic" strand are not always entirely credible either. Philby apparently found le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, widely regarded as *the* breakthrough post-Bond "realistic" spy novel, "sophisticated, if basically implausible" (Alan Bold, 1988: 10). Such a comment would no doubt have pained le Carré, who has written that "authenticity is frightfully boring but credibility is what novel writing is about and plausibility" (Stewart Crehan, 1988: 110). Indeed, as Barley notes, the authentic is sometimes artistically unusable, precisely because of its lack of plausibility, as in the case where two intelligence officers were given decorations on the same day by both the BND, in the then West Germany, and by the Russians. For le Carré, Barley maintains, "the demands of credibility opposed the formal attractions of incorporating such an albeit authentic event into his narrative" (1986: 29). Be that as it may, critics such as Lars Ole Sauerberg

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<sup>53</sup> McCormick and Fletcher insist that Fleming erred by writing the kind of detail that interested him, not his readers (1990: 6).

insist that le Carré's "realism" "is due to tone and atmosphere rather than plot" (1984: 95).

Even in what Crehan calls le Carré's "'hermeneutic'" novels (1988: 110), epitomised by *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, there are doubts about the authenticity of the plots. David Stafford argues that while it is true that Philby was protected by "a conspiracy of class", just as is le Carré's mole, Bill Haydon, "that he was unmasked by a Smiley is not". Rather, Philby's undoing was due to evidence from defectors, coupled with strong CIA suspicions. Hence, "*Tinker Tailor* is a fantasy: George Smiley a myth" (1989: 206).<sup>54</sup> Crehan suggests, following Roland Barthes, that as well as le Carré's "'hermeneutic'" novels, there are others – *The Honourable Schoolboy*, *The Little Drummer Girl* – which contain "'proairetic' elements"<sup>55</sup> which "veer more towards an adventure genre" (1988: 110). The point here is that even spy fiction writers who are generally regarded as definitively belonging to one strand or another, may vary their output over time. Thus, Sauerberg argues that "Fleming suddenly changed his mimetic technique from one in which international politics formed a credible background to his hero's ordeals to one in which the realistic approach was largely abandoned" (1984: 12). There is support for Sauerberg's analysis in the early novels, which feature as the enemy "SMERSH", based on the counter-intelligence service of the NKVD, founded by Stalin during the Second World War (Simpson, 2013: 22-4). The third novel, *From Russia with Love*, was written when Cold War tensions were running particularly high, and Fleming devotes more space to describing SMERSH than in any other novel. According to Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, "Cold War tensions are most massively present, saturating the narrative from beginning to end" (1987: 28).<sup>56</sup>

In relation to a writer refining his style over time, a significant case in point is Len Deighton. Deighton is widely regarded as second only to le Carré, in terms of a place in the vanguard of the anti-Bond brigade. The first in his series featuring an unnamed

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<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, it is undoubtedly the case that Aldrich Ames, arguably the most devastating double agent in US intelligence history, was unmasked (eventually) by painstaking detective work, although admittedly by a team of CIA/FBI officers, rather than a single cerebral investigator. See Sandra Grimes and Jeanne Vertefeuille (2012), Adams (1995), Weiner, et al (1995), Maas (1996).

<sup>55</sup> "Hermeneutic" and "proairetic" designate two of Barthes's five narrative codes. Both add suspense to the text, the former raising questions in the mind of the reader who wants loose ends tied up, the latter referring to sequential elements of action.

<sup>56</sup> It should also be noted that Umberto Eco insists that "In *From Russia with Love*, the Soviet men are so monstrous, so improbably evil that it seems impossible to take them seriously" (1981: 162).

protagonist, *The Ipcress File*, is presented as a dossier, a report by the unnamed protagonist to the Minister of Defence. On the whole, Deighton portrays the intelligence officers as bureaucrats living a generally routine, bureaucratic life. All this prompts Panek to suggest Deighton is trying “to give readers a taste of the real world of espionage” (1981: 221), or, in Jones’s words, that he is “trying to persuade his readers he is writing fiction” (102).<sup>57</sup> However, there is a marked disjunction between the early novels and the later triple trilogy where Bernard Samson takes centre-stage. The plot of the entire latter series revolves around the theme of betrayal, most notably, but not exclusively, in respect of the apparent defection of his wife and fellow agent, Fiona. Though there are action sequences, just as there are in le Carré’s novels, the pace of the plots is generally slow. There are many meetings, conversations, family scenes, eruptions of office politics, and so on. This is in contrast to what Panek calls “the hectic pace” of the earlier novels. *The Ipcress File*, for example, involves an ambush in Lebanon, bomb attacks, assassinations, the apparent kidnapping and interrogation of the anonymous hero, and atomic missile testing in the Pacific. Above all, the plot centres on an attempt to develop a new brainwashing technique, “Induction of Psycho-neuroses by Conditioned Reflex with strESS”. It is true that from the 1950s onwards, the CIA were involved, under the MKUltra programme, in research into mind-control techniques using drugs, hypnosis and advanced interrogation (John Ranelagh, 1988: 204). It may also be the case, as Jones maintains, that brainwashing was very much a subject of public concern at the time Deighton was writing (1990: 103). Nonetheless, to the modern reader it all seems as fantastical as Bond’s escapades. As the departmental secretary, Jean, says at the end, ‘A plan to brainwash the entire framework of a nation. It’s hardly credible’ (1966: 197). The “basic incredibility” of *The Ipcress File* is one of the reasons Atkins claims that Greene and le Carré “ring true in way that Deighton does not” (1984: 170).<sup>58</sup> On this reading, the author’s documentary style and meticulous attention to technical detail create no more than a veneer of credibility.

However, the fact that critics are able to point out the “objective” unrealities of plot or characterisation in spy fiction only matters so far; what counts for more is the

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<sup>57</sup> McCormick and Fletcher also refer to “factional” spy stories (1990: 10).

<sup>58</sup> Julian Maclaren-Ross’s review of *The Ipcress File* bemoaned the fact that “the really realistic spy novel as prefigured by *Ashenden* and Mr. Ambler, does not yet exist” (quoted in Sisman, 2016: 247).

perception of the reader. Thus, Panek suggests that “*At first glance*, Deighton looks like a writer devoted to giving his readers a realistic peep through the veil into the hidden world of spying and spies” (1981: 221, *emph. added*). Echoing Atkins, he goes on to explain that Deighton’s devotion to technical detail, together with the “scholarly apparatus” of footnotes and appendices, giving the material “weight and an air of importance”, stands witness “to the books’ verisimilitude”. In reality, Panek concludes, “Deighton has little wish to delve into the complex and narratively tedious real world of the spy” (222). Rather, he wants the reader to accept and believe in the fictional world he has created.

That many commentators and critics agree with Atkins that Fleming is “not a realistic writer” has already been noted. Again, however, there may be a disjunction between this “objective” judgement and that of the reader. For, as Atkins goes on to say, Bond’s creator “makes sufficient concessions to the reader’s workaday world to convince him that he is” (1984: 95). To a degree, this is also true of le Carré. It is well-known that under his real name, David Cornwell, he worked for both MI5 and MI6, which suggests, as Bold remarks, that “the public were ... convinced that le Carré was a novelist who made fiction from fact, who had impeccable inside information about espionage” (1988: 11). Yet le Carré told the *Sunday Times* in 1986 that ‘the world of intelligence I described never existed’. Accordingly, Bold concludes, “Le Carré could not make it clearer—Smiley, Karla, the Circus, the Centre, are all illusions. Le Carré’s world is fiction” (18). He is surely right that the “average” reader cannot possibly know in detail the real world of espionage, even though the secret services have adopted a greater measure of openness in recent times, especially compared to when le Carré and Deighton began their craft. The reader has to rely on the spy fiction writer to create a world that is convincing in its authenticity and credibility.<sup>59</sup> Bringing the reader in to the equation here raises the question of how important the “realistic” approach is to its exponents’ success. Is it really the case, as Crehan asks, that it is le Carré’s supposed “realism” that engages the reader, or may it be “something other than the ‘authentic’, extratextual reality”? (1988: 110). After all, we may agree with Katy Fletcher that, “The spy novel is essentially written for entertainment and reads as a form of

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<sup>59</sup> The role of the reader in establishing how far spy fiction is “realistic” is the subject of Section 4.



escapism". Spy fiction, she insists, "is not compelled to be realistic, or even plausible" (1987: 321).

In conclusion, I return to Walton's remarks which provide the epigraph to this section. He was discussing the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, but his words do have application here. Le Carré on the one hand, and Fleming on the other, represent the paradigms of the "realistic" and "heroic adventure" strands respectively. However, there are, of course, dozens of other Cold War spy novelists, each of whom is likely to lean towards one strand or the other, but will almost certainly combine elements of both approaches in a unique way. Symons places Anthony Price halfway between the two strands (1992: 227), while McCormick lauds Allbeury for getting the mixture right: "the correct amounts of excitement, thrills, dialogue, accurate detail and knowhow" (1977: 20). Panek represents Forsyth as meeting the reading public's need for spy novels that continued the approach of Ambler and le Carré in showing "an informed grasp of facts and events", but also involved "the traditional techniques of the thriller" (1981: 272). Former CIA agent William Hood is lauded for the "authentic quality" of his novels, even though *Spy Wednesday* strains credulity when professional intelligence officers entrust a dangerous role in their machinations to an innocent woman with no experience of espionage (1986). One could go on, almost endlessly. The distinction between the two strands of spy fiction does contribute to the "illumination" of the genre, and it does fulfil a useful heuristic function in aiding the analysis of "the sometimes complex and subtle character of particular works". However, as Sauerberg concludes, "a broad distinction like this is not accurate enough to describe all the shades of thematic emphasis which a genre boasting so many titles can be expected to show" (1984: 8).

### 3. “Realistic” Cold War Spy Fiction

*Realistic elements there have been in most works which have engaged the imagination and interest of readers.*

George J. Becker (1963: 4)

This section takes forward the analysis of the “realistic” strand of spy fiction, begun in the previous section. In the first place, the suggestion of a bifurcation of spy fiction into two distinct strands invites a parallel with discussions of “Realism” in literary theory more generally. Secondly, this section explores the relationship of spy fiction with “the real world” of espionage. Thirdly, based on the foregoing discussions, the idea of “realistic” spy fiction is fleshed out. Fourthly, the idea of “bringing the reader in”, introduced in the previous section, is further developed.

#### 3.1 Literary “Realism”

*Realism: a literary term so widely used as to be more or less meaningless except when used in contradistinction to some other movement.*<sup>60</sup>

In an echo of the idea that the “realistic” strand in spy fiction was initially formulated in opposition to the “heroic adventure” strand, M. A. R. Habib maintains that “realism was a broad and multipronged reaction against the idealization, historical retrospection and the imaginary worlds seen as characterizing Romanticism” (2019: 2). Or, as Becker puts it, when “modern realism” began, “romanticism was the enemy” (1963: 5). As a literary movement, Realism is generally associated, at least initially, with nineteenth-century texts in French, Russian, British and American literature, though its roots may be traced back to earlier times. Typically, realist texts are taken to foreground the commonplace, the everyday, the quotidian lives of ordinary people. Critics from various movements – Modernism, Post-modernism, Formalism, Structuralism, Post-structuralism, Marxism – have taken to task this kind of writing, on the grounds, inter alia, that it is conservative of form, rejecting innovation and experimentation; that it is essentially dishonest, “veiling”, as Pam Morris puts it, “its status as art, to suggest it is a copy or reflection of life” (2003: 97); that it defends the status quo by insisting that not only is this how the world is, but also how it has to be; and that it em-

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<sup>60</sup> *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. by Margaret Drabble (1985: 813).

bodies the erroneous epistemological premise that there exists an objective reality independent of the language used to construct it.

How far do criticisms of this kind find purchase on the “realistic” spy novels of (mainly) the twentieth century? My answer<sup>61</sup> would be that however valid such criticisms may be with reference to Realism as a literary movement, they miss the mark in relation to the “realistic” spy novel. Firstly, there is the question of the literary worth of espionage fiction. It is true that some commentators would “elevate” le Carré’s work to the status of literary fiction, due to his ability acutely to lay bare the failings and moral dilemmas of modern society and for “the complexity, subtlety and sadness of his stories” (Cawelti and Rosenberg, 1987: 47). Furthermore, spy novels have been written by authors more renowned for their literary works: Conrad, Somerset Maugham, Greene, Braine, Norman Mailer, Helen Dunmore and Ian McEwan. Nonetheless, espionage fiction is unashamedly first and foremost a popular, commercial genre. Its practitioners are little given to theorising about it as a literary form. By contrast, though “Realism” may, as Lilian Furst notes, lack “an organised corpus of theory”, its practitioners show sufficient self-consciousness “to make pronouncements about their ideals and their practices ... scattered in prefaces, letters and occasional essays and also interpolated in their fictions” (1992: 1-2).

Secondly, as Morris points out, “realism” has become a widely debated term, its “slippery nature” preventing it (and the related term “realist”) from securing a definition in “any precise and unambiguous way” (1992: 2). Even when applied narrowly to Realism as a literary movement, issues of definition still arise, such as the boundary between it and the related concept of “naturalism”. Indeed, Becker argues that “though the words *realism* and *naturalism* are freely, even rashly used, there is no general agreement as to what they mean” (1963: 3). The difficulty in disentangling what Kendall Walton calls “a monster with many heads” (1990: 328) is compounded when applied to espionage fiction. For, there is a strong argument that, whereas “Realism” as a literary term denotes a contested technical or aesthetic concept, “realistic”, as used in

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<sup>61</sup> Another, more mischievous answer would be to respond in the affirmative when David Lodge asks whether bringing the whole battery of these critical movements to bear on a single text “merely encourages a pointless and self-indulgent academicism, by which the same information is shuffled from one set of categories to another, from one jargon to another, without any real advance in appreciation or understanding” (1992: 143). It should be noted that Lodge himself responds in the negative.

relation to espionage fiction, reflects an “ordinary language” usage. We may agree with Becker that “usage may do what it will with a word” (1963: 35), but *in this context* “realistic” is surely bound up with such terms as “true-to-life”, “factual”, “plausible”, “accurate”, “believable”, “credible” and “authentic”. Hence, Jones maintains that, in the writings of le Carré and Deighton, “one had the apparently authentic documentation of the squalid, down-to-earth existence of spies” (1990: 100-1).

In my view, however, only one of the various lines of criticism aimed at literary Realism bears analysis in the present context, and that is the line of attack cited by Morris, wherein literary Realism is accused of practising dishonesty, disguising its status as an art form, by suggesting it simply and straightforwardly imitates life. As Henry James memorably remarked, “a story” is “after all only a ‘make believe’” (1884: 1). This sentiment is echoed by more recent critics, for instance Erich Heller, who cautions that “we are indeed asking for trouble if we try to define imaginative literature, which whatever else it is, is a sort of make-believe, in terms of what manifestly it is not, namely, reality” (1963: 592). James’s later remark, that novels have only “the air of reality” (6), is echoed by M. F. Slattery, who maintains that they have no more than “a semblance of reality” (1972: 62).<sup>62</sup> Becker, having first insisted that “reality means all things to all men”, goes on to argue that whatever we conceive it to be, in literature and art we find “a simulacrum of it on the basis of more or less fixed rules” (1963: 36). I shall return to this point later.

### 3.2 Spy Fiction, Spy Reality

*Frankly, few readers would be captivated by stories of analysts and case officers sitting at their desks or riding from one meeting to another on either side of the Potomac.*<sup>63</sup>

— Rapp (2017: 2)

This epigraph, taken from a former CIA officer turned spy fiction writer, underlines the problem referred to in the Introduction, namely that the way actual spies go about their work does not necessarily lend itself to the making of suspenseful or exciting

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<sup>62</sup> It is noteworthy that Wark continually refers to the “apparent realism” of spy thrillers (1998: 1209, 1212).

<sup>63</sup> Rapp’s point of view is echoed by John Gray, reviewing Mick Herron’s spy fiction novel, *Bad Actors*: “Committee meetings of desk workers who rarely encounter the subjects of their investigations are not easily turned into the stuff of adventure (2022: 39).

fiction. This point is endorsed by Boyd, who argues that “Non-fiction accounts of the secret service are highly interesting but only for obsessives or former operatives, I would suggest, in the way books about steam engines are fascinating only to train-spotters” (2011: para F). Spy novels, like any other works of fiction, are make-believe stories, not documentaries. This problem was anticipated by Somerset Maugham, who has his eponymous protagonist, Ashenden, lament that he knows “nothing so tedious as coding and decoding” (1988: 215). Maugham’s solution, outlined in the preface to his stories, was straightforward: “It is quite unnecessary to treat as axiomatic the assertion that fiction should imitate life” (1988: loc. 64).

All the same, *Ashenden* is widely regarded as one of the principal forerunners of the “realistic” school. A clue to how this apparent paradox may begin to be resolved lies in a passage by John Ehrman from the CIA’s Center for the Study of Intelligence. To make spy novels “realistic”, he maintains, requires “giving readers three dimensional characters, a credible sense of place and time, and accurate details of how intelligence services work” (2009, para 5 of 15).<sup>64</sup> The first two of these requirements are unexceptionable, especially given the manner in which he later fleshes them out. Writers like Conrad, le Carré and Greene, he argues, “give a sense of what it is like to be in the world of intelligence, deftly painting scenes that create a sense of foreign places.” He adds that “their characters, too, are fully formed people, with biographies and personalities as complex as any real person’s”. The last of his requirements, though, needs some unpacking. If there is too much “accurate detail”, too much description of the repetitive routine of a spy’s working life, then there is the risk of alienating readers. Better, then, as Ehrman argues, to capture “just the right aspect of bureaucratic routine to leave [them] with a sense of how things really work” (2009: para 6 of 15). At issue here, then, is not a slavish imitation of real life, but what Symons calls an “*approach to reality*” (1992: 225, *emph. added*). Here, we return to James’s idea of an “air of reality”, to the “semblance” or appearance of reality; in short, to verisimilitude rather than exact mimesis.

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<sup>64</sup> I suggest that Ehrman’s formula is a necessary remedy for producing readable “realistic” spy novels but it won’t entirely suffice; as has been foreshadowed above, spy fiction also depends on the creation of suspense. This is further explored in section 5.

Tzvetan Todorov's essay, "Introduction to Verisimilitude" provides a guide to understanding what is at stake here. Todorov rejects, in relation to literature, the "most naïve sense" of verisimilitude, namely, the need to be "consistent with reality" (1977: 82). For, he argues, texts must first of all be faithful to the rules and conventions – "laws", as he puts it – of the genre to which they belong:

We speak of a work's verisimilitude insofar as the work tries to convince us it conforms to reality and not to its own laws. In other words, verisimilitude is the mask which is assumed by the laws of the text and which we are meant to take for a relation with reality (1977: 83).

Todorov chooses to illustrate his proposition by reference to murder mysteries, which must privilege their genre imperatives over the demands of objective truth, but as he observes, his ideas may just as well be applied to crime fiction more generally. There is a clear parallel here with spy fiction, which, as was noted above, is frequently taken to be subsumed within that genre. Just as the "realistic" strand of spy fiction is taken to be a reaction to the "heroic" tradition, so the police procedural emerged as an antidote not only to the confections of the Golden Age puzzle-mysteries, but also to "hard-boiled" private-eye stories. The latter, though gritty and uncompromising, did not reflect the real world of crime-fighting either. As Ed McBain, the doyen of the police procedural, reputedly said, "The last time a private-eye solved a case was never" (Woody Haut, 1999: 130). By contrast, in the police procedural, as Hillary Waugh puts it, "professional policemen, using police resources and police methods are the ones who solve the crimes". But just as real-life espionage work is often boring and routine, so, Waugh points out, real-life murders are very often banal crimes, with few suspects, leading to a mundane investigation (1982: 44-5). This is why Israeli thriller writer Liad Shoham, in an echo of the above discussion about verisimilitude, maintains that while he strives to "emulate reality", that reality "is not necessarily the 'real one' but rather the common perception of reality" (2013: para. 8 of 10). John M. Reilly argues that crime writers persuade their readers to buy into a narrative by helping them "to believe it works according to a sort of logic". That "sort of logic", he suggests, depends on the construction of a series of "conventions designed to authenticate the relevance of narratives to social reality". It is through these conventions that the writer "makes a tacit contract to gain readers' credence" (1999: 374-75). We might, to return to Becker, regard these conventions as "more or less fixed rules". They apply to fiction generally, even its most

fantastical forms. In J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle Earth, even fabulous characters have to obey the rules of internal logic. In *Lord of the Rings*, for example, Gandalf, though a mighty wizard, cannot simply summon up fire from the ether; he needs solid material upon which to cast his spells. This is just as true of the "heroic adventure" tradition, where the rules of internal logic also apply. For example, in Fleming's *Casino Royale*, as we saw, James Bond avoids an excruciating death at the hands of "Le Chiffre", not by some superhuman feat of escapology, which would contravene the "rules", but through the intervention of a SMERSH agent who kills Le Chiffre, but leaves Bond alive because he has no orders to the contrary.

On this account, then, the "realistic" approach to spy fiction does not present a mimetic description of the real world of espionage to the reader, but instead asks the reader to accept the rules, conventions and internal logic of the genre – the "laws of the text", as Todorov would have it. Writers such as le Carré, Deighton and McCarry rely on supplying sufficient apparently authentic detail of time, place and tradecraft, together with ostensibly credible plots and well-rounded characters to persuade the reader to play along, to create, to rehearse an idea discussed above, the *perception* of reality.

### 3.3 Bringing in the Reader

*The reader! You dogged, unsultable, print-oriented bastard, it's you I'm addressing.*

— John Barth (1988: 127)

Wolfgang Iser maintains that "It is evident that no theory concerned with literary texts can make much headway without bringing in the reader" (1980: 34). The preceding subsection showed that this is particularly true in the case of the "realistic" strand of spy fiction, where writers rely on readers *perceiving* that the text in front of them is an authentic account of the way secret agents operate. Or, to rephrase this in more Todorovian terms, they depend on the reader accepting the "laws of the text" to create the "mask" of verisimilitude that provides the connection in the reader's mind to real-life espionage.

Much was written about the relationship between author and reader in the second half of the twentieth century. In his seminal essay, 'The Death of the Author', Barthes insists it is only the moment of reading that brings a text into existence and endows it

with signification; readers bring to the reading a network of meanings from their own biography: “a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture” (1968: para 5 of 7). Tendentiously, he insists that therefore the author has no greater claim to understanding or interpreting a text than the reader. Writing of this kind, as Lilian Furst points out, leads logically to what she describes as “reader-oriented” approaches to criticism (1992: 14), and what is more commonly known as “reader-response theory”. Iser, a leading exponent of this school of criticism, summarises this point of view as follows: “It is reasonable to presuppose that author, text, and reader are closely interconnected in a relationship that is to be conceived as an ongoing process that produces something that had not existed before” (1992: 206). There is, says Furst, a performative aspect to Iser’s proposition: “a transaction between text and reader” (1992: 15).

This performative, transactional process is often characterised by critics as a “suspension of disbelief”. Gardner, for example, maintains that le Carré’s *Karla* trilogy creates the secret world of espionage “in a way never before managed by a British writer”. This leads, he says, “to the supreme act of suspending disbelief” (1982: 78).<sup>65</sup> This approach is open to the criticism that it attributes to the reader a relatively passive role, in that he or she is being asked *not* to do something, that is to refrain from adopting a sceptical attitude to the text. Implicitly, Iser’s formulation suggests a more active, positive role for the reader. Indeed, he argues that reading becomes an “interaction” between the text and the reader, who is induced “to participate both in the production and the comprehension of the work’s intention”, thus establishing a “co-operative enterprise” between author and reader (1980: 24, 27).

Walton attacks the notion of “suspension of disbelief” directly. The kernel of his argument, first introduced in his 1983 article “Appreciating Fiction: Suspending Disbelief or Pretending Belief?”<sup>66</sup>, is that readers are not passive consumers of texts, but engaged participants who actively enter into a fictional world. They “are interested in, fascinated by, people and events they *know* to be non-existent”. He poses the

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<sup>65</sup> Gardner goes on to say that the reader “really feels himself to be looking into the heart of the intelligence community, not to mention the hearts and souls of its members” (1982: 78). Merry goes as far as to say that “The problem of the spy thriller is that the initial ‘suspension of disbelief’ required of the reader is one of the largest in all literary genres (1977: 47).

<sup>66</sup> Reprinted in Furst, 1992, as “Kendall L. Walton on Pretending Belief”.



question why we should be interested in the exploits of Superman “if there is no Superman”, or care what happens to Desdemona or Willy Loman “if we know — as we do — that since there are no such people *nothing* can happen to them?” (1992: 218).

<sup>67</sup>Walton’s answer is that rather than suspending disbelief, readers “pretend” to believe. Instead of the passive connotation associated with the idea of “suspension of disbelief”, “pretending belief” expresses the essential performative aspect of reading fiction. Moreover, “suspension of disbelief” suggests that readers do not completely disbelieve what they read and somehow, for example, “accept it as a fact that a boy named ‘Huckleberry Finn’ floated down the Mississippi River”. But, Walton continues, “the normal reader does not accept this as fact, nor should he” (233). Leaving aside caveats about precisely who such a “normal” reader might be, and why that person should be assumed to be a “he”, this is surely correct. Walton’s formula is that rather than “somehow fooling ourselves into thinking fictions are real, we become fictional” (234). The notion of readers “becoming fictional” might appear problematic, but it captures the idea that the reader chooses to enter the fictional world and participate in it. Or, as Walton puts it in a later work, the reader of fiction gets “‘caught up in a story’, emotionally involved in the world of a novel” (1990: 23). The reader, as he sees it, ends up “*participating* in a game of make-believe” (1990: 241).

There is a serendipitous connection here to one of the common tropes of spy fiction. Secret agents often participate in a “game of make-believe” within the fictional make-believe of the narrative. For, they frequently have to adopt a new persona, as cover for their clandestine activities. Sometimes this is merely a veneer: everyone knows that the new “political officer” or “cultural attaché” at such-and-such an embassy is actually an agent of the CIA, KGB, or other intelligence service. Other times, though, a new identity that stands up under scrutiny has to be created, along with a “legend”, a credible back story. For example, in Gardner’s *The Secret Families*, Barbara Railton is furnished with “two passports, a wig and a pair of severe spectacles”. One of the passports is in the name of Brenda Rourke and she is also provided with other items establishing her Irish identity. Her legend is as an “assistant to a publisher’s distributor in Swords, not far from Dublin airport” (1982: 304). Hers was only a temporary

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<sup>67</sup> The same question, of course, could be asked of le Carré’s George Smiley, Deighton’s Bernard Samson, or McCarty’s Paul Christopher.

change of identity; sometimes agents have to occupy their new persona for long periods of time. The preservation of their new identity can literally be a matter of life and death. It resembles a form of method acting, played for higher stakes. The agent pretending to be someone else seeks actually to *become* that person, inhabiting his life (more often than not it is indeed a he), adopting his appearance, habits, mannerisms, and even his way of thinking. As the disgraced double-agent, Victor Maxwell, says in Banville's *The Untouchable*, "The successful spy must be able to live authentically in each of his multiple lives" (1998: 191). Perhaps the readers of fiction do not go quite so far; or, at least, not all of them. "Pretending" belief does not mean readers actually come to accept fiction as fact; rather, they behave *as if* they did.

Clearly, each reader is unique and will engage actively with a text to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the degree to which the narrative grips her. Nevertheless, many readers, while knowing the worlds of their games of make-believe are fictional, can be said to inhabit them to the point of asking questions of the characters, or making exclamations about developments in the story, even if only in their heads. We can imagine, for example, a reader of *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* thinking to herself, or saying to a friend, 'MI6 should never have involved Liz Gold in the Mundt affair'; or, of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, 'I knew from the start Bill Haydon was the mole'. Of course, neither Liz Gold nor Bill Haydon actually exists, but for the reader, *fictionally*, they do. Hence, it is not hard to imagine a reader being emotionally moved by, say, the ending of *The Spy*, when first Liz and then Alec Leamus are shot to death. As Walton remarks, "fictional characters cause people to shed tears, lose sleep, laugh and scream" (1990: 246). At play here, therefore, is "a kind of empathy" with fictional characters, that is, "an ability to look at things more purely from their points of view" (296). Fictional engagement in a game of make-believe becomes a means of experiencing empathy for others (338).

Empathy has become an important notion in critical debates in recent times. Peter Bazalgette suggests that it has come to replace such notions as "imaginative sympathy", employed, for example, by Julian Barnes. There is considerable congruency between the two concepts. Barnes introduces his idea in the context of a discussion of civic virtue, arguing that a good politician needs to be able "to see the world from another point of view" (1980: 240). Meanwhile, Bazalgette goes on to quote with

approval Barak Obama's declaration that empathy involves "the ability to put ourselves in somebody else's shoes, to see the world through somebody else's eyes", before offering as his own definition "the ability to understand and share in another person's feelings and experiences" (2017: loc. 54). These are valuable ideas, but I would argue that they do not quite fully capture the experience of the reader. Instead, I would want to turn Barnes's concept around and suggest that what we are talking about is "sympathetic imagination". I use "sympathetic" here in the sense of "showing concern and understanding", but it is "imagination" that is the key. It is not just a case of the reader sharing in the "feelings and experiences" of the characters they encounter, in the sense of looking at the world "through somebody else's eyes". Rather, to borrow Walton's term, the reader gets "caught up" in the narrative, and becomes capable, especially in the case of "realistic" fiction, to imagine the events that befall fictional characters as happening to herself. In this way, the reader comes to see the fictional world *through her own eyes*, experiencing first-hand the feelings that such events engender.

We get a flavour of what is at stake in the following extract from Caroline Crampton's podcast, *Sheddunnit*. In episode twenty-four, entitled 'Sidekicks', Crampton discusses the relationship between Conan Doyle's Watson and Holmes, and its depiction in the recent BBC TV adaptation:

When it comes to the reader, it's Watson who holds all the cards. He controls Sherlock Holmes's image and reputation with the wider public and with the reader... people who know Sherlock only from John's blog are always commenting that they thought the famous sleuth would be taller in real life, or that they find him more impressive if he 'wears the hat'. They are comparing the real-life Sherlock with the image created by his sidekick, and finding him ever so slightly disappointing by comparison.

Of course, there is no "real-life" Sherlock, though the actor who plays him, Benedict Cumberbatch, is certainly alive and kicking. Moreover, the creative interplay of the TV series with Conan Doyle's stories adds another layer of complexity. Nonetheless, we are left with the impression that the "reader" invests fully in the world of Watson and Holmes and is prepared to treat them as "real" people.

There is a further felicitous connection here to the first volume of Deighton's triple trilogy featuring Bernard Samson, *Berlin Game*. Samson has been caught by the Stasi engineering the escape from East Berlin of his asset, "Brahms 4". Samson recounts

how his interrogator, Erich Stinnes, codename Lenin, began to question him about the career of Sherlock Holmes (1984: 296):

‘They’re just stories,’ I said. ‘No one takes them seriously.’  
‘I take them seriously,’ said Lenin. ‘Holmes is my mentor.’  
‘Holmes doesn’t exist. Holmes never did exist. It’s just twaddle.’  
‘How can you be such a philistine,’ said Lenin.

Writers of “realistic” spy fiction seek to engage their readers’ “sympathetic imagination” by attempting to persuade them that there is a correspondence between the fictional world they have created and the “real” world. Spy fiction is particularly well-placed to do this. After all, to reiterate a point made previously, though le Carré is universally regarded as the epitome of the “realistic” spy fiction writer, as Bold points out, for the reader “there really is no way of knowing how accurate [his] evocation of espionage is” (1988: 22). By definition, the real world of espionage is largely a closed book to the average reader. As McCormick and Fletcher observe, “Only those who have had experience in the business can know exactly what espionage involves” (1990: 1).

The techniques employed by spy fiction writers to create a fictional world that engages the reader is discussed in detail in the next section. In short, they conform to the three requirements for “realistic” spy fiction, as set out by Ehrman and noted in the previously: “three dimensional characters, a credible sense of place and time, and accurate details of how intelligence services work”. Of particular relevance, is the last of these three requirements. Meticulous descriptions of the tradecraft used by intelligence officers, and of hardware and equipment, bathe the reader in a torrent of detail, provoking an engagement with the text. As Merry puts it, this enables the reader to “acknowledge his own consortium with the author in making a story about these spies” (1977: 152). In addition, writers such as le Carré and Deighton, and even Fleming up to a point, are able to capture readers’ attention by surrounding them with the familiar, the mundane, the routine. In this way, as Sauerberg observes, the barriers between the reader’s world and the fictional one are broken down, and the reader “leaves his own outsider position and enters the world of fiction” (1984: 37).

In creating a fictional world for the reader to enter, what writers are hoping for is for the reader to believe that this world *could* be true. This takes us back to the idea that spy stories, like other kinds of popular fiction, rely on the reader accepting the rules and conventions of the genre. As alluded to previously in Section 1, this has

prompted some critics to dismiss popular fiction pejoratively, as “formulaic”. For example, in Eco’s essay on the Bond stories, there is a clear implication that Fleming relies on a set of narrative conventions that admit some variance, but fundamentally tell much the same story every time (1981: 147). However, as already suggested, to emphasise the formulaic nature of a work is not always to strike a denigratory note. Alan Hepburn maintains that “the repetition of tropes in espionage narratives does not diminish the pleasure derived from those narratives” (2005: 21). Readers of spy fiction surely take pleasure in the familiar nature of the genre, but also enjoy its wide variation; after all, le Carré’s novels are scarcely imitations of Fleming’s, or Forsyth’s, or even Deighton’s. Hence, as Jerry Palmer observes, what counts for the formula-addict-as-reader is “the enjoyment of each individual text as an end in itself” (1978: 2). The issue ultimately is not just that the reader is prepared to accept the genre’s conventions<sup>68</sup>, to play along, as it were, but rather that she comes to expect or even demand them. They become, as Merry puts it, “indispensable motifs”, even if the conventions actually contravene real-life espionage practice (1977: 74). The conventions, motifs and tropes of “realistic” spy fiction encourage the reader to believe it “has a factual foundation subsequently turned into art” (Bold, 1988: 18). The idea of reading as a transactional, performative act underpins this approach, writers having to negotiate the text with the reader to engage their “sympathetic imagination”, in order to forge what, following Reilly, we previously called a “tacit contract”. This contract solicits the pretence of belief from the reader, in exchange for adherence to the rules and conventions that demonstrate the fidelity of the writer to what Rimington calls “the features of the genuine spy world” (2008: xviii). These features might be “exaggerated” or “exploited”, as she puts it, but what matters is that the writer handles them in such a way that the reader is convinced of their authenticity. The next section examines the tropes and devices employed by writers to achieve this ambition.

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<sup>68</sup> Boyd lists the “tropes of espionage” thus: “duplicity, betrayal, disguise, clandestinity, secrets, the bluff, the double-bluff, bafflement, shifting identity” (2020: 4). Sauerberg identifies five “formula elements” of the (British) secret agent story: a “dichotomy structure”, a concern for ethics, a fixed role structure, a formula plot, and a thematic concern for the decline of Britain as a world power (1984: 22). Snyder outlines eight defining features of the spy fiction genre, including clandestinity, loyalty/betrayal, bureaucracy as an obstacle, labyrinthine plots and dramatic tension (2011: 6).

## 4. The Tropes and Devices of “Realistic” Cold War Spy Novels

*He chose a convoluted route back to the hotel. A direct walk from Levinson’s office would have barely taken five minutes, but he had re-entered a world where nothing was direct.*

— MacInnes (1986: 137)

I have argued in this commentary that a strict bifurcation between “realistic” and “heroic adventure” spy fiction is impossible to sustain. Writers develop and adapt their styles over time; any given work may contain recognisable elements of both strands; and this applies even to the paradigmatic proponents of either style, Fleming and le Carré. It makes more sense, therefore, to talk about a spectrum of Cold War spy fiction writing, with different works combining elements of the two strands in different proportions. This section examines in detail the major tropes and devices that writers employ to persuade their readers that their narratives do indeed represent a “realistic” portrayal of the lives and work of secret agents during the Cold War. How far writers will employ them, of course depends on their eagerness to establish the “realistic” nature of their narrative, and the extent to which that narrative affords them the opportunity to do so. The tropes and devices in question were foreshadowed in Section 2, in my discussion of Braine’s *The Pious Agent*. By and large, they satisfy Ehrman’s demand for “accurate details of how intelligence services work”. Before turning to a more detailed consideration of what this means, Ehrman’s other requirements – “three dimensional characters” and “a credible sense of place and time” – also repay brief attention. Brief, because these two elements are central to *any* type of fiction with even a passing claim to be regarded as “realistic”, and because an exhaustive analysis of them would exceed the limits of this commentary. It is, though, worth looking – at least in passing – at how their rendition is influenced by the particularities of the spy fiction genre.

### 4.1 Character Description

With regard to character description, genre fiction, such as the spy novel, is more likely to put plot before character than literary and other non-genre fiction.<sup>69</sup> However,

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<sup>69</sup> Not that there are no examples of character-driven genre fiction. Two that readily spring to mind are the SF novel *Flowers for Algernon* (1966) by Daniel Keyes and Patrick DeWitt’s western story *The Sisters Brothers* (2011). Both cases are examples of first-person narration, by Charlie Gordon and Eli Sisters respectively. Charlie tells the story through a series of “progress reports”, as following experimental

compared to the latter, spy novelists generally have more of an option of developing their characters over the course of a series. For example, le Carré has George Smiley;<sup>70</sup> Deighton, the anonymous protagonist of the early novels, as well as Bernie (and Fiona) Samson; McCarry, Paul Christopher; Price, David Audley; Freemantle, Charlie Muffin; Evelyn Anthony, Davina Graham; and so on. These writers are thus able to assemble a rounded portrait of their respective protagonist(s) over time. Where spy fiction writers employ one-off characters, the reader may be able to get to know him or her across the length of a novel.<sup>71</sup> Alternatively, a writer may choose to paint a detailed picture of a minor character, as le Carré does with Jim Prideaux in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, and Jerry Westerby in *The Honourable Schoolboy*. Interestingly, though, he left it until his last Smiley story, *A Legacy of Spies*, to fill in the backstory for the veteran intelligence officer's protégé and long-time tough-guy sidekick, Peter Guillam.<sup>72</sup>

In *A Legacy*, le Carré is able to rehearse some of his enduring themes, such as the class-based, public-school-orientated nature of the British secret service, and the ad hoc, haphazard processes of recruitment, dependent on the "old-boy network". Freemantle, on the other hand, in more than an echo of the profile of the anonymous protagonist of Deighton's *The Ipcress File*, wants to break through the class ceiling with his series protagonist, Charlie Muffin. In the eponymous first instalment we learn early on

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surgery he is transformed from a man with a very low IQ to one with extremely high intelligence. The narrative charts his developing intelligence, his changing emotional state, his evolving world view and the dynamic nature of his relationships with his friends, colleagues and family. As Eli goes about his business as a hired killer in the 1850s, he experiences an awakening, discovering his humanity as he develops moral qualms and begins to recognise that there is another way to live.

<sup>70</sup> It is undoubtedly the case that le Carré develops Smiley's character over the course of the several novels in which he appears. As Barley observes, typically in his spy fiction "Action is subordinated to character" (1986: 5). Nonetheless, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* in itself offers an extraordinarily well-rounded portrayal of the veteran spycatcher.

<sup>71</sup> Outstanding examples, as Snyder suggests, include Alec Leamas in le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, and Maurice Castle in *The Human Factor* (2011: 152).

<sup>72</sup> Strictly speaking, *A Legacy of Spies* is not a Cold War novel, it being set many years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, the plot concerns a review of events from the 1960s, and includes lengthy flashback passages, where not only Guillam, but also Smiley, Leamas, and Bill Haydon appear, as well as other characters from *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. In fact, much of the novel serves as a prequel to the former. In *A Legacy* we learn that Guillam had something of an unconventional early life in rural France, where he spoke Breton, but as he grew up, he began to conform to a more typical secret service background. He attended private schools in England, living in Shoreditch with an uncle who introduced him to "Jack", who, in turn, recruited him into the secret service (2017: 11-14).

Charlie's contempt for some of his public-school- and Oxbridge-educated colleagues, such as Snare:

Had there still been National Service, thought Charlie, Snare would have rolled his own cigarettes in the barracks to prove he was an ordinary bloke and made up stories about NAAFI girls he'd screwed. No he wouldn't, he corrected immediately. The man would have used his family connections to obtain a commission, just as he was invoking them to push himself in the service. He'd have still lied about the NAAFI girls, though (1997A: 11).

Charlie is annoyed by the public-school practice his colleagues adopted of calling each other by their surnames. In his world, "partners upon whom your life depended were called by their Christian names". Much of the time, Charlie manages to keep this contempt under wraps, but not always. At one point, when another colleague, Harrison, sneers about Charlie's preoccupation with "mates", the latter retorts 'I'd rather have a mate than a rich father and a public school accent'. This is met with derision and claims of "inverted snobbery" (12). Indeed, Snare believes that Charlie is "an out-of-date anachronism", the product of the manpower desperation that has forced the service to recruit from the grammar schools (Charlie attended Manchester Grammar). In Snare's mind, Charlie is a "disposable embarrassment, with his scuffed Hush Puppies, the Marks & Spencer shirts he didn't change daily and the flat, Mancunian accent" (13). Thus, Freemantle establishes that Charlie has a chip on his shoulder, or what his wife, Edith, calls "that bloody grammar-school pride" (43). But, throughout the novel, Charlie's consummate professionalism and sheer intelligence shine through. This proves to be a combustible combination, leading to conflict with his superiors and an explosive denouement.

One particular way in which writers of spy fiction attempt to depict "credible" characters is by portraying the work that intelligence officers do in an understated way. Greene's character Davis, in *The Human Factor*, sets the tone: 'Do you know I came into this outfit for excitement? Excitement, Castle. What a fool I was' (1978: 50). It has been a continuing thread of this commentary that there is a tendency to downplay the role of the spy, to present spying as a routine, bureaucratic occupation. For example, in Hood's *Spy Wednesday*, intelligence officer Alan Trosper resigns himself to a long wait for something to happen in Vienna, "watching TV and listlessly plowing through a paperback edition of *Nostramo*". In his experience, "spying was half waiting and



another thirty percent report writing and record keeping". Such activities, or *inactivities*, were "such a significant part of espionage" that he "had never understood why even the novelists with some professional experience never thought to mention it" (1986: 64).<sup>73</sup> Not that there aren't moments of relief among the hours of boredom and drudgery, at least according to the Director in Paul Vidich's *An Honourable Man*: 'The daily grind, the mounds of information, the hours of boredom poking around the mounds of information, punctuated by ecstatic moments of discovery' (2017: 21). Perhaps it is such moments that prompt Charles Thorogood, in Judd's *Legacy*, while recognising the basic bureaucratic nature of the work, to believe it is at least a step up from his former life. For someone recently transferred from the army, the SIS seemed to provide "the advantages of office employment ... without the monotony he assumed to go with office life" (2011: 6).

Nonetheless, Franklin, in Marchetti's *The Rope Dancer*, insists to his Soviet handler that 'Being a spy isn't much fun, Yuri. In fact, it's a big pain in the ass' (1974: 244). Yet Rudyard Kipling is credited with first describing espionage as the "Great Game" and that sobriquet lingers on. Secret agents such as Devereaux in Uris's *Topaz* accept they are at fortune's mercy: "You win ... you lose. The game goes on" (1969: 170). And, as with any game, as C says in *The Human Factor*, it cannot be taken too seriously (1978: 35). Thus, in Hone's *The Sixth Directorate*, intelligence officer Marlow tells a colleague, 'Our business is all a lot of silly nonsense anyway' (1975: 256). This is expressed most expansively by KGB officer, Pogodin, in Littell's *The Defection of A. J. Lewinter*:

My profession is not espionage—it's gamesmanship. I'm your aggressive pawn. I try to figure out what the Americans are doing. They try to figure out what they think we're doing. Then I try to figure out what they think we're doing. And they try to figure out what I think *they* think we're doing. And so it goes, ad infinitum (1991b: 43).

On the other hand, in Judd's *Legacy*, Thorogood's boss, Hookey, reminds him that while their work may be described as a kind of game, it's 'a game with consequences' (2011: 138). This point is echoed by Sydenham in Seaman's *The Defector*, addressing the judge in the trial of a defector, "Stevens", accused of murder:

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<sup>73</sup> George Parker, an intelligence officer in Tim Sebastian's *The Spy in Question*, takes a similar view of his job: "Intelligence was nothing more than reading the right things. Finding and interpreting, straining and squeezing till you have it all in the pot. Then sifting piece by piece, picking the truth from the lies, the clean from the dirty" (1989: 127).

I'm not playing a game of cricket. I have to deal with enemies of the state, my Lord, and there is no set book of rules which governs their conduct. Many of the duties assigned to me are repugnant. There are times when fire must be met with fire (1977: 214).

In complaining to Yuri about the trials and tribulations of spying, Franklin is at pains to stress the difference in being a handler compared to being a field operative: 'You're a case officer; you're not an agent. The pressures on you and the penalties for failure are a hell of a lot different' (1974: 244). This is another common theme. Trooper, for example, in *Spy Wednesday*, recognises that there is no such thing as a routine meeting with an agent in place: "A spy's existence was at stake every time he met his case man" (1986: 22).<sup>74</sup>

Hookey also reminds Thorogood that the "agent-case officer relationship" is often very close (2011: 386). While mutual trust, respect, and loyalty are clearly beneficial to that relationship, it can sometimes become *too* close. The first rule for a handler is not to become emotionally involved with the agent, but in Gardner's *The Secret Families*, Herb, a naturalised German working for the SIS, "was desperately in love with one of the girls he had recruited". So much so that he speaks to Naldo Railton about getting Ursula out of Berlin and marrying her (1990: 45). As it happened, Naldo also has a source – Helga – who is attracted to him, "but he had always kept her at arm's length, sticking to the first rule of running agents or sources" (85). While there is no romantic attachment between Franklin and Yuri, the former feels sorry for the latter, but rebukes himself for the thought: 'You have a job to do, and the agent is one of your tools. Don't forget, tools are cheap. You can always buy a new one' (1974: 162).

#### 4.2 Time and Place

Most of the novels under consideration were written during the Cold War, but some were not, such as Vidich's *An Honourable Man*, published in 2016. The problem for Vidich and others not writing contemporaneously, including myself, is getting the technical aspects right and thus avoiding anachronisms. After all, during the period in question, mobile phones, personal computers, the internet, email, and social media either

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<sup>74</sup> Similarly, George Parker, in Sebastian's *The Spy in Question* understands what he is demanding from his young agent, Sasha: "The boy risked his neck, while [he] risked nothing more than his posting" (1989: 156).

did not exist, or were in their infancy.<sup>75</sup> Inevitably, given the vast number of Cold War spy fiction novels, a wide variety of locations are employed. Berlin, that hub of intrigue and double dealing – defined by Goodman as “a spy novelist’s dream” (2016: 50) – is unsurprisingly very popular, as are London, Washington DC, Prague and Moscow. Hood’s characters travel to Budapest in *Spy Wednesday*; MacInnes’s *Ride a Pale Horse* is partly set in Rome; Uris’s *Topaz* largely in Cuba; Antony Trew’s *The Zhukov Briefing* on the island of Vrakoy off the Norwegian coast; Tute’s *The Resident* mainly in Athens; Vienna is predominantly the setting for Bill Rapp’s *The Hapsburg Variation*; and Bonn is le Carré’s *Small Town in Germany*. Uniquely, the action in Warren Adler’s *Trans-Siberian Express* takes place on a train journey across northern Russia. Writers give the reader a flavour of these locations in various ways, but two techniques are common. Firstly, in describing the countersurveillance measures taken by intelligence officers, they are able to paint a picture of the location in question, or at least a part thereof; secondly, they often present a detailed description of the real or imagined headquarters of an intelligence service, thereby giving the reader a feeling for their protagonists’ places of work.<sup>76</sup>

Examples of both may be found in Judd’s *Legacy*. In the first few pages, Judd gives the reader a flavour of his protagonist’s locale. Thorogood wakes up to a “humid, muggy London” in his basement flat in Kensington “with a view of sodden detritus in the well of the building and the housekeeper’s kitchen”. While the outside of the building suggests grandeur and opulence, it has been converted into flats, cheaply and shoddily: “The plaster was cracked, paintwork faded, doors warped and skirting boards had parted company with their walls” (2001: 5, 7). Thorogood’s first activity is to participate in “Tabby Cat”, a tradecraft training exercise, the point of which is to escape the surveillance of the training officers. What follows is a lengthy description of his manoeuvres as he wends his way across London towards SIS headquarters. One paragraph will suffice to illustrate Judd’s approach:

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<sup>75</sup> It is interesting to speculate how espionage during the Cold War would have developed had all this modern technology been available to intelligence services from the beginning.

<sup>76</sup> In *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, le Carré goes to great lengths to provide a detailed description of the “Circus”, the fictional headquarters of the British secret service located at Cambridge Circus. According to Sisman, le Carré based this description on Broadway Buildings which served as MI6 headquarters until 1964.

Out on Queensgate, he turned left towards Hyde Park after a deliberate glance across the wide street to check his car was undamaged. The rush-hour traffic was heavier than usual, perhaps in anticipation of further wildcat strikes on the Underground, and the delay in crossing the Cromwell Road gave him a pretext to look about as if seeking a quicker way. He did the same at Kensington Gore, then walked behind the Albert Memorial and into the park. He walked unhurriedly, trying to establish a regular but not purposeless pace (7).

We follow Thorogood through the park, into the Marble Arch subway, in and out of a C&A on Oxford Street, browsing in a car dealer's, ordering soup and bread in a tea shop in Old Beaconsfield, boarding a Circle Line train at Embankment, and so on, until he reaches Century House, his final destination. He uses an entrance on Lower Marsh, "a thriving street in a poor area, cheap and dilapidated but always busy" (21). The Head Office itself "was a 22-storey 1960s office block well situated for terrorist attack", given "the building's proximity to Lambeth North tube made for easy reconnaissance and escape". There is a petrol station at the foot of the building "that would enhance secondary conflagration". The underground garage, "and the nearness of run-down council flats, might have been designed for a car-bomber". On the other hand, "it was a light and cheerful building in which every office faced outwards" (30-1).

### 4.3 Verisimilitude

*Philby had been responsible for the deaths of many men; he was a life-long spy and a traitor twice over.*

– Williams (1976: 179).

Turning now to the main concern of this section – the analysis of how writers of Cold War spy novels attempt to depict intelligence services in a "realistic" way – the tropes and devices previously identified in *The Pious Agent* may be grouped into four main strands. Firstly, there is the attempt, by some writers, to suggest to readers that they are reading, what Jones has designated as "faction" (1990: 102), by interweaving their narratives with real people and events, and/or by adopting a quasi-documentary style. Secondly, there is what I shall call the "Jackal approach", that is, the meticulous portrayal of tradecraft, often involving the liberal use of jargon and technical terminology. Thirdly, there is the recurring focus on the threat from within and fourthly, there is the issue of the moral nature of espionage.

#### 4.3.1 Fact and Fiction

There are two principal ways in which writers of Cold War spy novels attempt to blur the lines between fact and fiction. Firstly, the incursion of the real world into their narratives helps to persuade the reader of their authenticity. 'Look', the writer is saying to the reader, 'you can believe in the verisimilitude of the characters and events in this story, because those characters interact with real-life spies and other personages, and the events that take place do so in the shadow of real-life events.' Hence, Kim Philby's presence looms large over a number of spy novels. He appears as a major protagonist not only in Williams' *Gentleman Traitor*, but also in Allbeury's *The Other Side of Silence*, in both of which he is portrayed as wishing to return to his homeland. In Forsyth's *The Fourth Protocol*, Philby is involved in a plot to launch a nuclear explosion in the UK, as a way to ensure a Labour Party victory in the general election to be followed by a hard-left coup. In Hone's *The Sixth Directorate*, Philby has a walk-on part, meeting the real-life head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, in Moscow. Otherwise, his appearance tends to remain strictly off stage, often made use of as a cautionary tale, as in Owen Sela's *The Kiriov Tapes*, where Quimper unsuccessfully attempts to assassinate Philby in Beirut and comes to suspect C, the head of SIS, of being a double agent. When the latter is asked if he was a friend of Philby's, he is quick to play down the relationship, allowing only that 'I knew the man, yes. I believe he once worked under me' (1973: 242) In the end, C discovers that it is Quimper's colleague, Carruthers, who is the traitor.<sup>77</sup>

Other members of the Cambridge Five are also namechecked, particularly Burgess and Maclean, who are prayed in aid in order to help prove Sir Richard Austen is a traitor in Rathbone's *A Spy of the Old School* (1984: 84).<sup>78</sup> Banville takes a different

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<sup>77</sup> The "Director of Counter-Espionage" in *The Pious Agent*, in reprimanding an underling, compares him to "Laughing Boy Philby" (1975: 13), and later, the "Chairman of the Security Council" reveals to Xavier Flynn that it was his boss, "Aslan", 'who really nailed Philby' (214). Often, Philby is simply referred to in passing, as in Tute's *The Resident*, where Andrea Eckersley is described as "something of an enigma in reverse as Philby had been" (1975: 389) and in the same author's *The Tarnham Connection*, Philip Tarnham is described as "the most celebrated defector since Philby" (1973: 7). Philby even casts a shadow over much more recent spy fiction. For example, in Daniel Silva's *The Other Woman*, set around 2015, the plot centres on the discovery that not only did Philby have a hitherto unknown illegitimate daughter, but that she was both MI6 head of station in Washington DC and a Russian spy.

<sup>78</sup> They are described as Wodehouse characters, remembered more "for their sordid failings of drink and crude homosexuality" in Allbeury's *The Other Side of Silence* (1981: 161); dismissed as forgotten in *The Pious Agent* (11); and referenced in relation to Philby, in *The Kiriov Tapes* (224). Burgess is cited as a friend of SIS officer, Croxley, in Hone's *The Sixth Directorate* (46).

approach, preferring to disguise the real-life characters who feature in his *roman-à-clef*, *The Untouchable*. It has previously been claimed that Banville's narrator, Victor Maxwell, is clearly based on Anthony Blunt;<sup>79</sup> in addition, Burgess is represented as Boy Bannister, and Maclean as Philip McLeish. It is also possible that Alastair Sykes is based on John Cairncross, who otherwise rarely puts in an appearance in Cold War spy fiction. Other spies, such as George Blake, Klaus Fuchs, and Oleg Penkovsky also receive mentions. As well as appearing in Hone's *The Sixth Directorate* as the head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov features in his later incarnation as First Secretary of the Communist Party in *Spy Wednesday*. Such other political figures as John F. Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Charles de Gaulle, Leonid Brezhnev, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara are also alluded to in various works.

*The Other Side of Silence*, *Gentleman Traitor*, *The Fourth Protocol*, and *The Kiriov Tapes*, are counterfactual imaginings of events that might have befallen a real-life espionage agent. As such, they pose an interesting question as to how "realistic" they are. After all, the reader knows, or at any rate can find out, that Philby did not return to England, was not the subject of an assassination attempt in Beirut, and did not take part in a plot to trigger nuclear weapons. Yet the skill of the writer resides in persuading the reader that these things *might* have occurred, to invoke, as it were, her sympathetic imagination. To do this, Williams attempts to make his fictional Philby a three-dimensional character by, for example, telling the reader that his favourite novel was Greene's *The Confidential Agent*. In addition, he inserts a mass of detail in the narrative, of a kind reminiscent of Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal*.<sup>80</sup> For example, Philby is given an envelope containing a fake passport, driving licences, credit cards, cheque books, boat tickets and plain-glass spectacles. But Williams doesn't leave it there; he goes on to give complete chapter and verse, devoting two whole paragraphs to a description of the passport.

The second way by which the line between fact and fiction can be blurred, is by means of presenting some or all of the narrative as a kind of official document, in order to create the illusion that the text has a quasi-documentary status. It has already

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<sup>79</sup> Blunt is also referred to in Gardner's *The Secret Families* and Rathbone's *A Spy of the Old School*.

<sup>80</sup> The back-cover blurb includes the following quote from the Daily Mail: "All of it is immensely believable, in much the same way that *The Day of the Jackal* was believable".

been noted that Deighton famously included memos, dossiers, appendices and footnotes in his early novels featuring his unnamed protagonist. But perhaps the example *par excellence* of this approach is Charles McCarry's first novel to feature his series protagonist, Paul Christopher, *The Miernik Dossier*. Whereas the *Ipcress File*, though presented as a dossier to the Ministry of Defence, is told in the first person and divided into chapters, McCarry's narrative consists entirely of documents of various kinds: reports by agents; internal memos; letters; bugged telephone conversations; cables; debriefing notes; and dispatches. Other writers have followed suit in suggesting to the reader that she is being given a glimpse into the archives of the secret service.<sup>81</sup> It is doubtful whether any reader would mistake these narratives as non-fictional accounts of actual events during the Cold War, but the use of these devices serves the purpose of encouraging the reader to pretend to believe in the verisimilitude of the narrative.

#### 4.3.2 The "Jackal" Approach

*The American L.V.R was small, only ten feet two inches long, with a 7.5-foot wheelbase powered over individual wheels with a quarter-horse-power electric motor. Ours will be at least twenty feet over a comparable wheelbase and have a midwheel section, giving total wheeling of twelve feet. It will have a payload capability of 2,670 pounds. The American only had 1,080 pounds, including astronauts.*

— Victor Pavel

This comparison of "mooncars" by supposed Russian defector Pavel, is part of a lengthy section in Freemantle's *Goodbye to an Old Friend*, which is devoted to a discussion about Soviet plans and equipment for moon and space exploration (1975: 49-54). In its depth of detail and use of technical language, it resembles many similar passages found in spy novels. Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal* arguably represents the apotheosis of this meticulous approach. That novel's great success is not wholly due to the build-up of suspense as it reaches its denouement, for, as previously noted, we know from

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<sup>81</sup> Anthony Trew's *The Zhukov Briefing* opens with a prologue comprising a "log" from the "USSR Baltic Fleet" recording the launching of the eponymous Russian nuclear submarine, and a "file entry" from the UK's Ministry of Defence. It ends in similar fashion, with extracts from *The Times*, London. It also reproduces "Top Secret" documents in the form of a "planning memo" and a "memorandum". as well as extracts from the "Movements Log" of the Russian ship, *New Construction*. Judd's *Legacy* opens with an extract from a "surveillance report" (2011: 1). Braine's *The Pious Agent* also introduces "memos" at several junctures, some between senior British Intelligence officers, other between their counterparts in the KGB. Littell introduces a "Top Secret" personality profile of the would-be defector in *The Defection of A. J. Lewinter*, including transcripts of interviews of those who knew him best.

the beginning that the “Jackal” does not succeed in his mission. Rather, a great deal of its fascination lies in the meticulously detailed account of the processes by which the would-be assassin goes about his job: obtaining false identities and the necessary forged documents to support them;<sup>82</sup> disguising his own identity; commissioning a special type of rifle and other equipment needed for the job in hand; practising with the gun to enable him to adjust the sights precisely; and making his way across France towards Paris, improvising as necessary to stay one step ahead of the authorities. This detailed account of the assassination plan is interesting and intriguing in its own right, but also serves to reinforce the “realistic” nature of the story and the events which sustain it. Mutatis mutandis, this meticulous approach – persuading the reader that a narrative is a “realistic” account of the work of a spy by amassing a wealth of detail – is a common trope among Cold War spy fiction writers. There are two elements to what I am calling the “Jackal” approach: the portrayal of tradecraft; and the liberal use of technical language and jargon.

The importance of the portrayal of tradecraft lies in the way the writer draws the reader into the world of espionage. Not only does the reader get to believe that she is being afforded a real insight into the way spies actually operate, but both the techniques described and the language that is used to describe them, are sui generis: they evoke the unique and fascinating milieu of the intelligence officer. There are a number of categories into which these techniques fall. Firstly, there are surveillance and countersurveillance measures, which feature in many of the books under review here, particularly the latter. It is precisely what Peter Bristow was engaged in, the “he” mentioned in the epigraph to this section. These techniques have their own vocabulary, so that in *The Secret Families* Arnold Farthing asks Naldo Railton, ‘You okay? No lice?’, to which he replies, ‘I’ve been dry-cleaning for the last hour. If anyone’s on me it was the invisible man’ (1990: 36). “Dry-cleaning” meant detecting and, if necessary, shaking any surveillance; “lice” referred to any watchers who might be on an operative’s tail. Later, we see them putting these techniques into practice, for example, taking fifteen minutes over a five-minute walk, “sweeping the streets twice” (59). In fact, Naldo does find himself under surveillance, “the focal point of a whole watcher team”. There are

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<sup>82</sup> According to Winks, the head of the Passport Division of the US State Department labelled *The Day of the Jackal*, “the best primer to passport fraud” (1978: 178).



two cars and a van, and probably four pairs of men, “a Soviet goon squad in the heart of London”. As is often the case in these stories, Naldo uses the city’s underground system to shake them off (94-5). His wife Barbara adopts similar methods, having been given instructions by her husband:

‘You have to think of it as an epidemic ... Imagine anyone on to you has got the killer disease, and you catch it, ring o’ roses and all. Tishoo-tishoo, all fall down. Black death. All surveillance is the Black death.’

So, she did “three doubles” on the underground, changed taxis twice and walked the last half-mile, “and was as sure as anyone who has not done it before could be sure, that she had no tails” (305-06). Hence, if an agent is free of surveillance, he or she is “clean”. Trooper declares himself so in *Spy Wednesday* after rushing halfway across Park Avenue in front of a moving taxi, and taking stock on the traffic island (1986: 44). Later, when he arranges to meet a Hungarian source, Istvan, in Budapest, he tells himself, “It would take an hour or more before the two men completed the tiresome backtracking, abrupt street crossing, and the apparently innocent window shopping necessary to convince themselves that they were clean” (214).

Also commonplace is the dictum that effective surveillance requires teams of watchers, just as Naldo had detected four pairs of “footmen” in London. Accordingly, George Parker, in *The Spy in Question*, recognises two surveillance teams, but because they “didn’t dodge, didn’t alternate positions, made no attempt to bracket him”, he realised they had wanted him to see them, suggesting there were other, hidden teams (1989: 219). Naturally, these teams would communicate with each other, employing the most up-to-date equipment. Hence, when Sasha, part of a network working for the British, is trailed by two teams, one on foot, the other in a car, they are equipped with “new CIA-style wrist microphones and transparent earpieces” (88). The last word might best be left to Naldo, who speaks for many of the operatives featured in these stories. He has become, we are told, “almost paranoid” about the use of tradecraft:

He practised it day and night, asleep or awake, twenty-four hours a day, every day. This was no game, from which some field agents got a buzz. Naldo, like his father and uncle before him, saw tradecraft as a way of life. A highly skilled agent had once told him that tradecraft should be second nature (1990: 118).

The second category of tradecraft techniques refers to mechanisms put in place to facilitate contact between agent and handler in order to pass instructions, money,

messages, photos, reports and other intel from one to the other. Face-to-face meetings are the most straightforward way of doing this, but are not without risk, as both could be caught if either fails to execute effective “dry-cleaning” measures. Highly elaborate protocols are often employed, on the assumption that an agent may not be able to attend an agreed meeting. In *the Spy in Question*, Parker runs through the procedure in his head: “You go to the rendezvous four days running, same time, same place, and then you crash out. That’s the rule. Make another contact, set another date. Repeat the process after ten days” (1989: 127).

The two most popular alternative methods are brush passes and dead drops<sup>83</sup>. Examples of both, together with some other trademark tradecraft techniques, are portrayed in a scene from Marchetti’s *The Rope Dancer*. First of all, Franklin takes his family to a Watergate Concert performance of the *1812 Overture*, where he spots his contact, a man from the Hungarian Embassy, accompanied by a little girl. The fact that he was holding her in his right hand and she had a pink ribbon in her hair, added up to a “safe signal”. Then there follows a classic brush pass as the two agents make their way through the crowd, “inadvertently” bumping into each other and exchanging apologies. Meanwhile, the Hungarian surreptitiously drops a packet of *Lucky Stripes*, which Franklin retrieves. Later, he empties the packet and tears it apart, revealing a message from his handler, Sandor, setting up a dead-drop site in the Loft Mountain camping grounds:

Near the trail, there is an old oak tree with a low limb that has the skull of a small mammal embedded in it. There is a large hollow space on the top side of the limb. Put your material in it ... (1974: 62).

Dead drops are generally more prosaic than this. For example, in Hone’s *The Sixth Directorate*, double agent Helen receives letters from KGB officer Alexei Flitlianov in her private mailbox, held under another name, at Grand Central post office in New York (1975: 225). Rather more colourful are the methods adopted by Devereaux in *Topaz*. He receives messages from his Cuban contacts written on cigarette paper and sewn into chickens. Having received them, he sprinkles tobacco on them, rolls them up and puts them into a half-full Camel cigarette package (1975: 147).

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<sup>83</sup> Sometimes called “dead-letter boxes”.

Both brush passes and dead drops also represent a potential danger. Brush passes require the simultaneous physical presence of both the agent and his handler, or a surrogate. However, the fleeting nature of the contact reduces the risk. In spy fiction at least, it is the dead drop that proves the more hazardous. In *Spy Wednesday*, potential KGB source, Kinzl, tells CIA officer Trosper about the capture of the latter's Russian agent, Galkin: 'Galkin was arrested after we spotted him emptying a dead drop. That was a silly mistake. You should have known better' (1986: 67).

A third, indispensable category of tradecraft techniques refers to the exchange of coded messages. A relatively simple method is the employment of one-time pads. In this system, agent and handler have an identical pad of cipher sheets, each of which is used to encode and decode a single message and then destroyed. One-time pads have been in use for a hundred years and the code should be completely unbreakable as long as the system is used properly (H. Keith Melton, 2000: 124-25), a point Thorogood remembers as he sits, bored, in a code-breaking training session, in *Legacy* (2011: 100).<sup>84</sup>

A popular alternative to one-time pads is the book code, where handler and agent each have the exact same copy of a book and exchange messages detailing page and line numbers, and the locations of words and letters. Even if the message is intercepted, the code cannot be broken without the relevant edition of the book in question. In *The Spy in Question*, British Intelligence's Moscow mole Kalyagin uses a well-known English nursery rhyme: "You had only to reverse the order of the lines, according to the day of the week and you were there" (1989: 32). A "simple system, easy for the agent to remember", is employed in Hood's *Spy Wednesday*. Twice a week Trosper sends his fellow secret service officer Roger Kyle to the Vienna Central Post Office to check the phone books. One day, Kyle spots the numerals "3—4—7" jotted across the top of page 222 of volume two. He knew that meant that Trosper's agent, Galkin, was calling for an emergency meeting at the safehouse on Frank Gasse 7, on the third day of the week at 4 in the afternoon (1986: 22-3).

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<sup>84</sup> In Allbeury's *The Other Side of Silence*, when John Powell asks fellow secret service agent, Jerry Cole what code he was using, the latter replies, 'Good old-fashioned one-time pads' (1982: 56). Later, Powell finds a pad used by the KGB, and uses a dusting of powdered lead from a pencil to raise the impressions left when an agent had encoded a message (156-57).

Codes of various other kinds also feature prominently. Phone lines are generally un-trustworthy, so much so that in McCrum's *In The Secret State*, Strange is too scared to use the phone, instead sending Quitman a postcard map of the London Underground, which when held up to the light discloses a pin-prick in the station designated for a rendezvous (1981: 149). More commonly, telephone conversations are encrypted. According to Thorogood in *Legacy*, the British secret service employed "Bournemouth", a phone system "cleared to Top Secret" (2001: 177). Naldo tells Farthing, in *The Secret Families*, that some years ago he'd had a phone call from the CIA's Berlin Station: "Ginger's looking for you." That's what they said ... Ginger was London that week. "Looking for you" meant proceed London fastest' (1990: 45). This kind of technique is often used to set up meetings. Accordingly, when Franklin needs an urgent meeting with his handler, Yuri, in *The Rope Dancer*, he makes a phone call, answered by a man "with a heavy Jewish accent":

'May I speak to Isaac, please.'

'This is Isaac.'

'Isaac, this is Jacob. I have a message for Abraham.'

'He's not here, Jacob. I will tell Abraham you called.'

This conversation, meaningless to anyone listening in, confirms to Franklin that Yuri will meet him at ten o'clock that night. Later, Franklin again rings "Isaac", as "Jacob", to tell him that everything is ready for "Abraham", so that Yuri will know he has delivered some material to the agreed dead drop site in St Matthew's Cathedral (1974: 161, 225).<sup>85</sup> In a similar way, a doorbell code may be agreed in advance to reassure an agent that his visitor is a welcome one, though this does not always work out as planned. In Sela's *The Kiriov Tapes*, Amory, from British Intelligence, is guarding the eponymous Russian agent in a safe house, when the doorbell rings, causing the former to reach for his weapon:

Then the bell rang again. Three times.

Amory waited. The bell rang twice.

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<sup>85</sup> Similarly, when, in Uris's *Topaz*, Devereaux, in Washington's Union Station, wishes to give instructions to a contact, Pepe Vimont, in Miami, he calls him to wish him happy birthday. Pepe declares that there is a bad connection and urges him to call back at "Eva's" number. Eva is the codename for a telephone booth, and ten minutes later, Pepe is ready to receive a call from Devereaux, now ensconced in a booth in the Commodore Hotel (1969: 79-82). In Aaron Latham's *Orchids for Mother*, a CIA asset, Ladyslipper, uses the phrase "I've been smoking too much" to inform his handler that he was going to leave a message in the men's room at the Kennedy Centre (1978: 15).

He let the Walther slip back into its holster. It was the code.  
The bell rang once more.  
That was it.

Except it isn't: the visitor shoots to death both Amory and Kiriov.

Spies commonly make use of what are often quite crude signals – chalk marks are popular – to indicate there is a message in a dead drop, or similar. Thus, in Vidich's *An Honourable Man*, CIA officer Mueller and his asset, Vasilenko agreed a series of signals to indicate the next exchange:

A chalk mark on a post office box near the Episcopalian church southeast of Union Station let Mueller know to make his way to a busy clothing store downtown. He found the manila envelope Vasilenko left between the radiator and the wall in the men's room, and Mueller left an envelope of cash in the same spot (2017: 118-19).

Thorogood and his agent Viktor also uses the "traditional" system of chalk marks in *Legacy*, though as Thorogood's boss, Hookey, points out, this is not without its risks for a KGB officer operating from within a watchful *rezidentura*: 'Where does he get his bit of chalk without anyone knowing and why does he carry it around in his pocket?' (2001: 303). As an alternative, in order to inform Thorogood that he had carried out a successful operation, Viktor puts a sticker in a phone box near the Russian Embassy (304).

The brush pass between Franklin and his Hungarian contact, as described earlier, shows the use of a pre-arranged signal to signify that the agent is "clean". There are several other examples of "safe" signals in the book. At one point, Franklin has instructed another contact, whom he is meeting at the Smithsonian, to point at one of the animals to indicate that all was well (1974: 29). Later, on his way to a rendezvous at a restaurant, he is confident that there is nothing untoward, because two men are at the door, one with a rolled-up newspaper in his left hand, the other with briefcase in his right (161). Such signals are generally as simple as that. In *The Secret Families*, Naldo, on appearing at a hotel to meet a contact, "put his right hand in his coat pocket – it was a very old signal they had once used to mean everything was clear" (1990: 35). In *Legacy*, Thorogood and Viktor agree that the latter should wear a cap formerly belonging to the former's father to signal he was clean (366).

A fourth category of tradecraft techniques is the use of false identities. Just as the “Jackal” adopts multiple identities and takes care in preparing appropriate disguises, so the same may apply to spies. It was noted previously that in Gardner’s *Secret Families* Barbara Railton is provided with a disguise, a fresh identity and a “legend” to back it up. Meanwhile, her husband Naldo has the use of four “idents”, apart from his own. These “backstops” are not simply “the flash-identities used on one-time operations”. Rather, they are “the full thing”, capable of standing up to intense scrutiny:

They included everything from passport, credit cards, DHSS card and number, diaries with details of next-of-kin, insurance policy numbers and the like. Tied to these were travellers’ cheques and currency for use in most European countries, plus pocket litter; franked envelopes holding letters addressed to him at checkable addresses, ticket stubs, bills, Diners Card receipts (150).

There is a strong echo of the *Day of the Jackal* in *Spy Wednesday*. Secret service officer Trosper has lost his best friend, Harry Fessenden, in a car accident. Years later, Trosper applies for a copy of Harry’s birth certificate and thus equipped, is able to apply for a passport in his dead friend’s name. Consequently, he is able to acquire a “cold passport”, a bona fide document, issued legally.<sup>86</sup>

Although the two terms that form the second element of “the Jackal” approach – technical language and jargon – may be used interchangeably, a useful distinction may be made here. The former I take to relate to the kind of material contained in the epigraph to this sub-section, where Pavel gives a detailed description of American and Russian “mooncars”. Other examples already mentioned include Fleming’s elaboration of James Bond’s armament – “a very flat .25 Beretta automatic with a skeleton grip” – and Braine’s of Xavier Flynn’s – “The Smith and Wesson 38 Special”. Braine also tells us that Flynn is driving a modified Mini Clubman Estate fitted with “a 1275 cc GT engine”, “a single double-choke Weber carburettor, a high-lift camshaft, a close-ratio gearbox ...” and so on. The car’s interior is also described in painstaking detail (1975: 46). “Technical language” is thus employed to characterise the descriptions of weaponry, vehicles, scientific apparatus, and other equipment. These examples relate to things that

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<sup>86</sup> Relatively recent revelations have brought to light that many years on from the publication of *Day of the Jackal*, this ethically dubious methodology was still being used by British so-called “spy cops”: “Officers routinely stole the identities of dead children to use as fake personas during deployments that usually lasted four years”, *The Guardian*, Saturday, 21 May, 2002, p. 37.

are not specifically a feature of the world of espionage. This is equally true of Trew's *The Zhukov Briefing*. Given that the novel centres around the grounding of a Russian nuclear submarine off the coast of Norway, it is not surprising that it features detailed descriptions of nautical equipment and the day-to-day operation of the vessel. Near the beginning, after a brief prologue, the *Zhukov's* sonar and torpedo officer Lieutenant Krasnov reports to his Captain: 'Sonar bearing zero-two-seven. Range eighteen kilometres. Classified single screw diesel. Bearing moving left' (1976: 11). More follows, including an account of the type of torpedo on board, "the latest in use in the Soviet Navy" which "was propelled by a piston-type swashplate engine powered by high pressure gas driving a pump jet propellor" (16).<sup>87</sup>

On the other hand, many of the technical descriptions do relate to things that, if not unique to the world of espionage, are instantly recognisable as belonging to it. The aforementioned Lancaster, for example, sometimes carries a compact belonging to his girlfriend, Catherine Tierney. Unbeknownst to him, it contains a recording unit, which registers his conversations with his Soviet contacts (218). Miniature recording devices are meat and drink to an intelligence officer. At a meeting at Langley, Bristow, in MacInnes's *Ride a Pale Horse*, wonders how many of those present had "a microrecorder tucked away in either a wristwatch, a tie-pin, a cigarette holder, or a cuff-link?" (1986: 66). Further, a "small Japanese tape recorder" is placed under the bed of Helen Stanopolous and Dr Petrov in Tute's *The Resident*. In addition, the Russians have placed "a pinhead microphone" in the lapel of the latter's suit, "which picked up everything within a radius of ten metres" (1975: 383).<sup>88</sup>

It is also common in these books for intelligence officers abroad to be based in their country's embassy, just as in real life. To ensure secrecy, both in relation to their "civilian" colleagues and any extraneous prying ears, the officers generally have use of a

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<sup>87</sup> Similarly, the plot of Francis Clifford's *All Men Are Lonely Now* centres on the development of missile-defence systems, and thus we learn about "Roman Candle", a laser-guided, ground-to-air missile for use against low-flying aircraft (1967: 26f), and a more revolutionary prototype version, "Discus" (38). Later, Lancaster, a double agent, busy trying to doctor launch reports on Roman Candle, realises that certain aspects could not be tampered with, namely, "the cluster-separation technique, laser-effectiveness, stabilizers, fuse and nose cone" (149).

<sup>88</sup> Other paraphernalia in the spy's box of tricks include a metal roller-ball pen provided for Xavier Flynn, from which, when pressed three times, "three inches of needle-pointed metal, the thickness of a bicycle spoke, protruded" (1975: 63); "microdots" and "infinity bugs" in *The Secret Families* (1990: 81, 128); a "briefcase camera" in *Legacy* (2001: 43), and a "Minox" camera in both *Gentleman Traitor* (1974: 154) and *The Rope Dancer*, where a miniature tape-recorder also features (1974: 90).

safe, soundproofed room, sometimes called a SCIF: a *Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility*. A meeting in such a room, between Parker and Sir David White in the British Embassy in Moscow is described in Sebastian's *The Spy in Question*:

Parker unlocked the door with a plastic card. This was the 'cage' – a room within a room, built on struts made of special concrete. The construction materials had been flown in from London under diplomatic bond. Only British workmen had been allowed to touch them. The two men passed through an airlock. Parker pressed a switch and the outer wall filled with the noise of jumbled voices ... A final guard against electronic eavesdropping (1989: 22).

The use of the term "cage" shades into jargon, which, in this context, I take to be idiomatic expressions used to describe tradecraft or other aspects of the operation of espionage. Such language is rife among real-life security services. So, for example "HUMINT" is intelligence gleaned from human sources, as opposed to "SIGINT", which derives from intercepted electronic or telephonic messages passed between members of a rival service. Examples of jargon in spy fiction that have already been discussed include "dry-cleaning", "dead drops", "brush passes", "moles", "wet jobs", and "legends". Also common are "illegals" and "assets". The former, also known as "sleepers", are agents who do not operate under the cover of, say, an ostensible post at an embassy, but are sent into an enemy country to live and work as normal people, ready to be activated at a later date, possibly many years later. For instance, in Hone's *The Sixth Directorate*, British agent, McCoy refers to "a deep cover illegal" who has been given extensive training "for the job he was *going* to do. In the future" (2009: 62). An "asset" refers to a source or agent prepared to provide information to a rival secret service. Someone who pretends to be prepared to defect or act as an asset, but who is actually still working for his native country, is known as a "dangle".

There are also terms that are used less commonly, sometimes only by a particular writer. The plot of Forsyth's *The Fourth Protocol*,<sup>89</sup> for example, centres on a "false

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<sup>89</sup>*The Fourth Protocol* follows the template Forsyth established in *The Day of the Jackal* in providing the reader with meticulous descriptions of the tradecraft of secret service operatives. Apart from the "false flag" operation (2011: ch.10, 10), Forsyth also goes into great detail in explaining "legends", "illegals" and "one-time pads". There are echoes of the *Jackal* in his description of the way KGB Major Petrofsky, establishes a legend, obtaining the passport and other documents of James Duncan Ross who had died in Rhodesia some years previously. A legend, Forsyth tells us, is "the fictitious life story of a nonexistent man, supported by a host of perfectly real documents". A lengthy exposition follows (Ch. 11, 18-22). In Chapter 10, Forsyth defines "illegals" as "men and occasionally women who are rigorously trained to go



flag” operation, that is, one in which a source is recruited believing himself to be working for a friendly power (in this case South Africa), when in fact he is giving secrets away to an enemy (the Soviet Union).<sup>90</sup> Other terms are more obscure. Gardner, in *The Secret Families*, describes the three components of mobile surveillance teams as “drivers, eyeballs and footmen” (1990: 11). In Hood’s *Spy Wednesday*, Brattle designates “someone who can clean a passport as new” as a “cobbler” (1986: 201). In both books, young attractive females, used primarily by the KGB in “honey-traps”, are called “swallows” (211; 261). We are told in Rathbone’s *A Spy of the Old School* that the codes and cipher section of British Intelligence is known as “The Golf Club and Chess Society” (1984: 19); in *Legacy*, that MI6’s offices in Century House are disguised as “Rasen, Falcon & Co.” (2001: 169); in *The Secret Families* that the Director of Central Intelligence’s conference room at CIA headquarters at Langley was called the “French Room”, and that in the CIA their regular polygraph testing was known as “fluttering” (1990: 241, 423)<sup>91</sup>; and in Williams’ *Gentleman Traitor*, according to Lennie Maddox, that the KGB is nicknamed “Galina Borisovna” (1976: 36).

Littell has a particular penchant for jargon, acronyms and abbreviations. For example, in *The Once and Future Spy*, CIA agent Wanamaker refers to how tightly guarded the “product” from the improbably named “Operation Stufftangle” was: ‘It is BIGOT listed, stamped NODIS, NOFORN, ORCON, stamped anything we can get our paws on’ (1991c: 16).<sup>92</sup> This passage is located in Part One of the novel, entitled *Walking Back the Cat*, which is also the title of a later novel about an “illegal” brought out of hibernation in the western USA. In this context, the phrase means to review meticulously an operation to try to find if and where it went wrong, and if there were any leaks. It doesn’t figure widely in spy fiction or in commentaries on the practice of espionage,

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into foreign countries and live under deep cover” (8), before describing in the following chapter their modus operandi (5). “One-time pads” are given the full treatment in Chapter 12.

<sup>90</sup> The idea of a “false flag” operation may now be known to readers, as it has been a feature of real-world conflicts, such as the Russia-Ukraine war which began in 2022.

<sup>91</sup> “Fluttering” features prominently in Latham’s *Orchids for Mother*. For example, CIA candidate Paul Fitzsimmons undergoes several polygraph tests, in the “flutter chamber”, supervised by Anderson, the “flutter man” (1978: 49).

<sup>92</sup> A BIGOT list contains all the names of those authorised to know certain information; NODIS means “no distribution”; NOFORN denotes material not to be seen by foreign nationals; ORCON stands for “original control”.

which might have suggested that it was an invention of Littel's own, except that it does seem to have purchase in the business world.

Not that spy fiction writers are beyond inventing terms to suit their purposes. Le Carré is particularly prone to do this. He uses "the Circus" as a metonym for the British secret services, amalgamating both MI5 and MI6; is probably responsible for coining "honey trap" and "mole", terms later taken up by real-life espionage agencies;<sup>93</sup> and almost certainly invented "pavement artists", "lamplighters", and "scalphunters", or at least applied those terms in a particular way to espionage.<sup>94</sup> According to Pippa Bailey, he also introduced the expression "to come in from the cold", which was later taken up by the intelligence agencies (2022: 31). In addition, le Carré employs the term "Moscow Rules" liberally in the Smiley books. While it is a term used commonly enough in spy fiction to depict a set of guidelines or principles for an agent operating behind enemy lines, particularly in the Soviet capital,<sup>95</sup> le Carré extends its use to cover careful tradecraft practices more generally. His biographer Sisman argues that le Carré's use of jargon "accentuates the verisimilitude, giving the reader the impression that he or she is being admitted into a select society, with its own private lexicon" (2016: 201).<sup>96</sup>

### 4.3.3 *The Enemy Within*

*The external threat that you and I and everyone else in Whitehall have been brought up to believe in at the peril of our administrative souls is far less real than the enemies we nurture here ourselves.*

— Frank Strange

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<sup>93</sup> According to Sisman, in 1981 the editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary* wrote that *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* contains the first use of "mole" in print in the way that has now become familiar (2016: 357). The would-be defector, "Irina", tells Rikki Tarr, "A mole is a deep penetration agent, so called because he burrows deep into the fabric of Western imperialism" (1976: 56). Senior State Department executive, Jon A. Wiant states categorically that "the word 'mole' itself is a fictional creation of John le Carré" (2004: 22).

<sup>94</sup> "Pavement artists" are operatives skilled in active surveillance, particularly, as the name suggests, in following a target on foot; "lamplighters" are specialists in more passive forms of surveillance, watching and listening, whether by electronic means or otherwise; "scalphunters" provide muscle for undercover operations.

<sup>95</sup> Gordon Corera defines Moscow Rules as "a shorthand to refer to the type of procedures or tradecraft an intelligence officer would have to employ to carry out his trade in the city's streets" (2011: 136).

<sup>96</sup> Allbeury offers an alternative point of view, arguing that "Le Carré's use of jargon and buzz words sometimes seems like a leg-pull – they're too often words I've never used" (1978: 167).

Typically, in the “heroic adventure”, the enemy is a villain representing the malign forces of a foreign power, such as Germany in the two world wars, or the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries during the Cold War. Or, in the case of Fleming’s work, it is, as Jones puts it, “the power-crazed megalomaniac threatening the survival of the free world” (1990: 101). For writers pursuing a more “realistic” approach, the focus frequently shifts to “the enemy within”, so that, as Cawelti and Rosenberg have it, echoing Strange in McCrum’s *In the Secret State* (1981: 169), the protagonist’s “most dangerous adversary turns out not to be the external enemy, but betrayers in his own country” (1987: 47). There is a reflection here of the reality of the Cold War, in which paranoia was rife on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and, in the West, traitors such as Klaus Fuchs, Aldrich Ames, Edward Lee Howard, George Blake, and the Cambridge Five became household names. Their legacy was to plant the seed in the minds of readers of spy fiction that all this was the stuff of espionage at the time. “Deception,” says Throgood’s boss Hookey in *Legacy*, “is an essential tool” in the spy’s armoury (2011: 131). Naldo, in *The Secret Families*, wonders if the CIA’s Head of Berlin Station, Farthing, is about to lie to him, but he’s not overly concerned, for “they all lied to each other. It was their common parlance” (1990: 37). More unusual is John Trenhaile’s *The Man Named Kyril*, which tells the story from the point of view of the KGB; the eponymous agent is sent to London to help identify a traitor at the heart of Moscow Centre. By the time Kyril’s mission is coming to an end, he has come to believe he has been a mere pawn in a game he did not understand and which ultimately left him out in the cold:

It was no longer a matter of simple loyalty. Kyril had been lied to, used, squeezed into a role in a play which he never fully understood, one where the script was constantly being rewritten between and behind the scenes (1982: 255).

The point here is that deception and betrayal have not become unforeseen consequences of the business of espionage, but are central to its very nature, as Corera notes:

It involves persuading someone to betray secrets, a deeply personal, even intimate act, and one fraught with risks. More often than not this involves betrayal, sometimes of a country, sometimes of a friendship (2013: 3).

The search for traitors and/or the procurement or defence of double agents and defectors are at the heart of such classic texts as Greene’s *The Human Factor*, Deighton’s

triple trilogy featuring Bernard Samson, Littell's *The Defection of A J Lewinter*, le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and, perhaps most famously of all, his *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. Lesser-known writers sometimes produce novels wholly or mainly devoted to the pursuit of the enemy within, while at other times that is just an element of a broader narrative. Perhaps the one who best epitomises the focus on the enemy within is Brian Freemantle who, as Atkins observes, "is mainly concerned with treachery" (1984: 230). Freemantle's novel, *Charlie Muffin*, demonstrates how the major tropes that reflect this focus may be woven through a single narrative. It is the first in a series of eleven novels featuring the eponymous British Secret Service agent, who, as the author puts it, "shuffled into print at the height of the Cold War" (1997: 7). Charlie is just about as far removed from a hero in the James Bond tradition as is it possible to imagine. Already in his forties in the first instalment, he is, as noted above, a grammar-school boy with a "flat Manchester accent", morose and down at heel, not someone to be attired in hand-made shirts or Saville Row suits. He epitomises the cynical journeyman intelligence officer whose working life is characterised not by glamour and excitement, but by humdrum routine and hard slog. As was also already noted above, he carries an enormous chip on his shoulder, and is deeply contemptuous of the public school and Oxbridge types that dominate his department.

There are three major tropes at issue in this context. The first reflects Cawelti and Rosenberg's assertion, noted above in subsection 1.3, that the "realistic" school has become obsessed with the themes of betrayal and deception. These themes, along with conspiracy and paranoia have become prevalent plot-lines, and double-agents, moles and defectors prominent characters in Cold War spy novels. In *Charlie Muffin*, deception, betrayal and treachery occur right at the very beginning and constitute the dominant leitmotif throughout. The novel opens with Charlie in East Berlin, where he suspects that his own Secret Service, through fellow agents Snare and Harrison, have set him up to be killed or captured by the East Germans. This suspicion is confirmed when he escapes to West Berlin and enters the bar of the Kempinski Hotel. To say the least, his colleagues are surprised to see him:

'Oh my God.' [Snare] managed, badly.  
Harrison tried, but couldn't locate words, standing with his head shaking refusal.  
'You're dead,' insisted Snare, finally. 'We saw it happen.'

That was proof enough for Charlie: “They really *had* tried to set him up” (18).

From this point on, the narrative largely focuses on the potential defection of General Kalenin, a senior figure in the KGB. Along the way, Freemantle is also able to evoke the paranoia engendered by these themes of betrayal, treachery and treason. Charlie reflects on the fact that when the new Director took up his office, he sent everyone home one day, because, “Cuthbertson, who read spy novels, imagined he would find evidence of a traitor if he turned out every desk and safe in the department” (39).<sup>97</sup> We also learn that Cuthbertson’s opposite number in the CIA, Ruttgers, while serving as a major in the OSS during the Korean War, had killed ten men by hand because he believed they threatened his exposure. Two of them had been Americans, of whom he harboured no more than suspicions, but whom he disposed of anyway, “just in case” (44).

Kalenin has offered himself to the British Secret Service, for a sum of five hundred thousand dollars, much to the chagrin of the CIA, whose attempts to horn in on the operation are rebuffed. As a consequence, Ruttgers tells the CIA’s Moscow Resident to lean on the Brits ‘in every way.’ His message is clear: ‘If something started happening to their operatives, ... then they’d need assistance, wouldn’t they?’ (58). Consequently, both Snare and Harrison are unmasked as secret agents by the KGB, the latter being shot to death by soldiers in East Berlin, the former ending up in the Lubyanka, where his psychiatric health declines rapidly. Charlie has no doubt as to what has happened to the two operatives, pointing a finger at Ruttgers, and claiming ‘two colleagues have already perished as a result of CIA involvement’ (93). Eventually, Kalenin crosses the Czechoslovakian border into Austria. The two Directors celebrate his arrival at a safe house in Vienna. However, Kalenin has no intention of defecting. Instead, he has arranged for his own operatives to take control of the safe house, enabling him to capture Cuthbertson and Ruttgers, whom he aims to use as bargaining tools to force the release of a Soviet agent in prison in the UK. Kalenin goes on to reveal that the trap has been orchestrated in conjunction with Charlie, who would walk away with the money.

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<sup>97</sup> This is a barely concealed reference to the behaviour of James Jesus Angleton, chief of counterintelligence for the CIA from 1954 to 1975. Angleton believed that all Western agencies had been deeply penetrated by the KGB and turned the CIA inside-out accordingly.

In essence, then, the Secret Service has betrayed Charlie, the CIA has betrayed the Secret Service, Kalenin has pretended to betray the KGB, and Charlie has betrayed his employers. Had Kalenin actually defected, he would certainly have been regarded as a traitor, a designation that would also no doubt have been applied to Charlie. As Naldo in *The Secret Families*, tells one of his superiors, ‘the whole of our job concerns traitors.’ After all, he goes on to say, ‘Every bloody asset I’ve had to deal with throughout my career has been a traitor. We’re all traitors to somebody’ (111-12). For example, Uris’s *Topaz* is a long and wide-ranging story about the conflict between the Soviet Union and NATO, including the Cuban Missile Crisis, but it also features a Soviet defector, Kuznetsov, who warns the French secret service of a grave threat to France. Similarly, while, as we have seen, Braine’s *The Pious Agent* primarily concerns the exploits of Xavier Flynn, an assassin working for British Intelligence, it also involves the discovery of a “leak” and the uncovering of a traitor at the top of the organisation.<sup>98</sup>

Seemingly, whereas violent operatives and even assassins are regarded as hazards of the job, traitors are not to be countenanced. In Vidich’s *The Mercenary*, would-be defector Petrov declares: ‘Traitors live in the ninth circle of hell. Traitors are below rapists, below child molesters’ (2021: 91).<sup>99</sup> It is in this light that Monk, a Special Branch officer in *The Spy’s Wife*, flings the accusation about her husband in the face of Molly Keatley, to jolt her out of her state of denial: ‘I’ll tell you *what* he is just so you can stop pretending not to know. Sam Keatley’s a spy, missus. And he’s a traitor, missus’ (2006: 12). Franklin’s handlers in *The Rope Dancer*, take it in turns to remind him exactly what he has become. Sandor tells him, ‘Here you sit. A spy, a traitor to your country’.

There is, therefore, sometimes a palpable reluctance to employ such a toxic term among secret service officers. Flynn’s boss, “Aslan” in *The Pious Agent*, insists that it is a “silly word”, but then he has just been revealed as a double agent. Meanwhile, CIA officer George Mueller in Vidich’s *An Honourable Man* muses that “Traitor was a word

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<sup>98</sup> Examples of novels where the preoccupation with the enemy within dominates, include, as their titles suggest, Seaman’s *The Defector*, Anthony’s work of the same name, and Williams’ *Gentleman Traitor*, as well as Hill’s *The Spy’s Wife*, Freemantle’s *Goodbye to an Old Friend*, Gardner’s *The Secret Families*, Marchetti’s *The Rope Dancer*, Judd’s *Legacy*, Trenhaile’s *The Man Named Kyril*, Sebastian’s *The Spy in Question*, and Hone’s *The Sixth Directorate*.

<sup>99</sup> Devereaux takes the same line in *Topaz*: ‘We were talking about traitors. Worse than the whores, the pimps, the paid stranglers. The infinite scum, the most vile being is the man who betrays his country for money’ (1969: 398).

that never appeared in memos; it was unsaid in meetings". He is reluctant to use the word himself, "because it implied a betrayal of unthinkable proportions" (2021: 17). Later on, when a colleague uses the word, he repeats it "as if shocked by it". Unlike the Chairman of the Security Council in *The Pious Agent*, he prefers "double agent", because "It was easier on the ear, more ambiguous" (27). In Deighton's *London Match*, Bernard Samson's girlfriend Gloria denounces KGB moles as 'Traitors' and 'Bastards': 'They should be shot'. Samson shrugs this off: 'It's all part of the game' (1985: 185).

The second major trope, to pick up on Corera's point noted above, involves the idea that betrayal might also operate on a personal level, where family and/or friends are involved, as well as a professional level, where it is the secret service and the country that suffer. A case in point is *Charlie Muffin*, where the first example of personal betrayal concerns sexual infidelity. Throughout most of the novel it appears Charlie has betrayed his wife Edith by engaging in an affair with Cuthbertson's personal secretary, Janet. In fact, Edith has known all along that her husband is seeing Janet even though she is clearly not completely reconciled to his stratagem. At the very end she asks him 'Was it really necessary to have an affair with that secretary?' Charlie insists it was essential: 'It gave me a channel to feed Cuthbertson any attitude I wished. And from Janet I got everything I wanted to know about their thinking' (140). As it turns out, Janet is betraying Charlie, as she has agreed to spy on her lover on her boss's behalf. Charlie goes on to betray a friend, a young East German student, Günther Bayer, sacrificing him to save his own skin. He furnishes Bayer with papers and a forged passport, encouraging him to attempt to cross to the West, even though Charlie believes it to be a set-up. He rationalises this by telling himself "It was a question of survival". He also tells himself that he couldn't know for sure it was a set-up and perhaps his protégé might have made good his escape. But he knows that this is "weak reasoning" (14-15).

The line between personal and professional betrayal is sometimes blurred, as is exemplified by le Carré's seminal novel, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, in which Bill Haydon not only betrays his country and the Service but also his friend George Smiley by having an affair with his wife Ann, possibly partly to distract and disconcert him. Towards the end of the novel, just before Haydon's apprehension, Smiley contemplates his friend's "appalling duplicity": "Haydon had betrayed. As a lover, a colleague, a friend; as a patriot" (1975: 297). Similarly, in Deighton's triple trilogy, Fiona Sampson appears not only to

betray her country, but also to be unfaithful to Bernard, her husband and fellow secret service officer. As for lesser-known writers, to take just one example, Thorogood, in Judd's *Legacy*, is not just concerned for his country that his father has been revealed as a long-time double agent who worked for the KGB, but feels personally let down: "His father was deliberately, systematically, routinely betraying him, his sister, almost everyone he knew and all they stood for" (2011: 158).<sup>100</sup>

The third trope concerns the attempts by individuals to justify morally what others would regard as betrayal and even treason. In *Charlie Muffin*, Kalenin offers Cuthbertson and Ruttgers a defence of Charlie's behaviour, reminding them he had been set up to be captured or shot in Berlin, unjustly vilified for his interrogation of a captured agent and subsequently demoted: 'How can you expect loyalty when you treat a man like that?' (137). As for Charlie himself, after the events in Austria he hides out in Brighton with Edith who has been party to the plan throughout. But she is worried about how what he has done will sit on his conscience and so confronts him about it, asserting 'I can't believe you don't feel any guilt ... You betrayed your country.' Charlie, however, is unrepentant, justifying his actions by arguing that by bringing down Cuthbertson 'I rid the service of a man who was bound to lead it to disaster' (139). Nor does he have any regrets about the fate of Snare and Harrison: 'Those two bastards stood on a viewing platform in Berlin watching for me either to get captured or shot' (140). Fundamentally, Charlie is in denial, refusing to countenance the charge of betraying his country. Surprisingly, perhaps, his view is partly endorsed by Wilberforce, who by the

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<sup>100</sup> There is a great variety of narrative approaches to the themes of betrayal, treason and treachery. We are told at the outset that Sam is a traitor in Hill's *The Spy's Wife* (2006), but the story is less about the British intelligence agencies' attempts to track him down, but far more about the effect on and consequences for his wife, Molly. Similarly, Dunmore's *Exposure* (2016) focuses on the effect of her husband's alleged betrayal on Lily Callington and her efforts to protect him, and Ted Willis's *The Left-Handed Sleeper* (1975, in which an MP has appeared to have been a double agent, gives prominent place to the reactions of his wife and her burgeoning relationship with the investigating MI5 officer. Seaman's *The Defector* (1977) deals with the problem of a Soviet defector trying to come to terms with his new life in the UK. Anthony's *The Defector* (1982) is primarily concerned with the attempt by the British to bring the defector Sasanov's wife and daughter to London. Freemantle's *Goodbye to an Old Friend* (1975) engages with the issue of how a defector may be proven to be genuine, but also introduces the plot-line of a Soviet agent pretending to defect in order to "take out" a real defector. Marchetti's *The Rope Dancer* (1974) concerns the defection of a US agent to the Soviets and is told from his point of view. Judd's *Legacy* (2011) follows the career of Thorogood, newly inducted into MI6, as he attempts to recruit Soviet diplomat, Viktor, whilst coming to terms with the shocking discovery that his father was a double agent. Hone's *The Sixth Directorate* (2009) develops multiple plot-lines, including the KGB's search for a secret group operating inside the organisation. As we have seen, Trenhaile's *The Man Named Kyril* (1982) approaches the issues of deception and betrayal from a Soviet point of view.



time of the next novel, *Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie*, has succeeded Cuthbertson as Director. His new opposite number in the CIA, Onslow Smith, evinces surprise that Charlie hasn't fled to Moscow. That, though, explains Wilberforce, is the last thing Charlie would do: 'Charlie Muffin wouldn't have regarded what he did as helping Russia. Any more than he would think of it, initially anyway, of being traitorous to Britain or America'. Rather, he goes on to tell Smith, it was a case of 'Charlie fighting back when he realised we were prepared to let him die' (1997B: 166).<sup>101</sup>

That applying the description, "traitor", to a given individual is not always straightforward, comes through in the following conversation between Powell, SIS, and Padmore, ex-SIS, about Philby, in Allbeury's *The Other Side of Silence*:

'You don't feel he was a traitor?'

'It depends on what you call a traitor.'

'A man who gives or sells his country's secrets to its enemies.'

'Are you referring to the Soviets?'

'Of course.'

'They were our allies most of the time that Philby was working for SIS. Our enemies were the Nazis' (1981: 49).

Philby is clearly a controversial figure in the fictional world of espionage. In Williams' *Gentleman Traitor*, journalist Cayle tells intelligence officer Hann, 'Philby had a lot of men killed, one way and another, and the old boys you are supposed to be protecting let him get away with it' (1976: 136). On the other hand, when Cayle informs Charles Pol that Philby was regarded as a traitor in his own land, the ultra-cynical Pol shrugs: 'Traitor? It is a useless word. Who are the great traitors? Pétain? Salan? De Gaulle? Perhaps your Mr Smith in Rhodesia?' (110).<sup>102</sup>

As noted above, Thorogood laments that his father's treachery was so completely divorced from its consequences. For, the consequences of such betrayals are often fatal: in real life, dozens of agents lost their lives at the hands of the KGB because of the treachery of, for example, Aldrich Ames and Edward Lee Howard. Equally, in *The Other*

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<sup>101</sup> There are echoes of similar sentiments elsewhere. For example, Thorogood had previously acknowledged, just prior to the passage reproduced above, that his father would not have seen his own behaviour as a form of betrayal, believing himself to be acting out of a "sense of compassion, of mission, perhaps as pure of origin as It was divorced from its consequences" (2011: 157). This kind of thinking is on all fours with that of Special Branch officer Croxley, who tells himself in Hone's *The Sixth Directorate* that "a man, traitor to one side, was all the more necessary hero to the other" (1975: 48).

<sup>102</sup> The ambiguity inherent in judging any double-agent or defector morally is reflected in the paradoxical title to Glister's second Knox novel: *The Loyal Traitor* (1992).

*Side of Silence*, Mayer explains to Powell that because of Philby, a CIA operation in Albania was a total disaster: 'Men's lives were lost' (1982: 182).<sup>103</sup> In *The Other Side of Silence*, "The Girl" seeks to justify, or at any rate explain, Philby's treachery:

'He was disgusted with the politics of his own country, and at the same time angered by what the Nazis were doing. His political instincts were to the left. He felt that Communism was the only hope. He fell in love with a system and a country he knew nothing about' (106-07).<sup>104</sup>

The Girl's rationalisation fits in with the FBI's classic formulation of the reasons why agents choose to betray their country, expressed, as Michael Smith records, through the acronym "MICE", which stands for "money, ideology, compromise or ego" (2019: 17). Franklin in *The Rope Dancer* makes it abundantly clear that it is the first of these reasons that prompted him to foreshadow Ames's real-life behaviour by walking into the Hungarian embassy to offer his services as a double agent. He tells his contact 'I'm no ideological nut. I got into this filthy business for only one reason – *money*' (1974: 56). Sam Kealey, in Hill's *The Spy's Wife* is a clear example of a traitor motivated by ideology, believing in the superiority of Soviet communism. Similarly, French secret service officer, Devereaux, asserts in Uris's *Topaz*, when asked how a man could possibly turn against his country: 'There are dedicated Communists about us who spy because they believe in Communism' (1969: 396).<sup>105</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, it is unusual to find a spy novel where an agent's treachery is the result of a compromising situation, such as a honey trap, although in Rathbone's *A Spy of the Old School* it is thought that Lord

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<sup>103</sup> Later, an Albanian freedom fighter remembers another disaster when Ukranian nationalists suffered the same fate: 'They were expected. Their names, their routes, and their times of arrival, were known in advance to the KGB. None of them survived' (199).

<sup>104</sup> Ames was an archetypal case of a double agent primarily motivated by money, as he vainly sought to keep up with his new wife's taste for luxury, although he also believed his talents were undervalued by the CIA. A prime example of "compromise" involved British naval attaché John Vassall, who was caught in a trap in Moscow's illegal homosexual underworld. Smith goes on to declare that this formulation is too simplistic: "Agents do things for the same reason any human being does things, anything" (18).

<sup>105</sup> The case of Kuznetsov, the Russian defector in *Topaz*, provides an alternative ideological motivation. In an echo of the justification for betraying atomic bomb secrets to the KGB provided by Klaus Fuchs, Kuznetsov tells Devereaux that he is convinced that 'the West is too strong'. The success of NATO has meant that 'the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries are badly outgunned'. As there is no chance, in his view, of them catching up, then peace through *rapprochement* is the only sustainable strategy, but that is not an argument that the military would countenance. Hence, he acts as he does, 'because I don't want the Soviet Union destroyed' (1969: 44). He insists 'I am not a traitor! ... I love Russia! I love my country!' (45)

Riversdale might have betrayed secrets to the Soviets because he was “a remarkably apt person to be blackmailed” (1982: 41).<sup>106</sup>

#### **4.3.4 The Moral Nature of Espionage**

*Spying is a very dirty business.*

— Nicholas Maasten

This outsider’s view, expressed by a senior British police officer to a secret service agent, Quimper, in Sela’s *The Khirov Tapes* (1977: 254), is also widespread within the fictional secret services themselves. Schillig tells his fellow CIA agent, Foreman, in Gardner’s *The Secret Families*, ‘What a shitty, dirty, underhanded immoral business we’re in’ to which Foreman replies, with a shrug, ‘beats working for a living’ (1990: 416).

One of the most extensive disquisitions on the moral nature of espionage is to be found in Lear’s *Death in Leningrad*. Sue Ashweald, a sometime intelligence officer for the “Firm”, mounts a spirited defence of her friend, Peter Grant, sentenced to fifty-six years in prison for passing secrets to the KGB:

Peter wasn’t a government official. He was an Intelligence agent. For the Intelligence agent, words like decency have no meaning. They don’t apply. Intelligence work of our sort is quite simply *war carried on in peace*. And its warfare far worse than the overt sort because it’s totally lawless, totally unbridled ... Anything goes. (1986: 75).

In her view, it is hypocritical for a secret service that actively entices foreign nationals to spy on their own countries to demand such a draconian punishment for someone who ‘chooses to fight on their own secret ground and by their own lawless and amoral methods, the mortal enemies of the country he prefers!’ (75). In response to the official line that Grant’s actions caused irreparable harm to his country, she scornfully answers that the work of the Firm is just ‘vacuous, pernicious, wasteful nonsense a few overgrown schoolboys have the cheek to get up to in the country’s name!’ (77).

Other intelligence officers, also British in both the following cases, suggest the issue of morality does not arise. In Hone’s *The Sixth Directorate*, Harper chides his subordinate, Marlow: ‘You believe in it all. In the rights and wrongs. But there aren’t any in

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<sup>106</sup> Perhaps the British and Americans find such procedures too distasteful, and C may be believed in *Legacy* when he declares, ‘We don’t do blackmail’ (223).

this business' (1975: 329). Similarly, in *The Secret Families*, Keene responds to a question about the moral issues involved in their work by asking, 'Moral issues? What moral issues?' Warming to his task, he goes on to characterise his profession, as follows:

'We're whores, and like whores we provide a necessary service. Not to individuals, but to our country. We do the dirty jobs: the jobs the press call stinking and underhanded' (1990: 342).

For intelligence officers like these, the mantras that guide their actions are "the ends justify the means" and "my country right or wrong".

One common, possibly causal, element of this cynicism is a niggling doubt about the supposed moral superiority of the West. This is in contradistinction to the archetypal viewpoint of the "heroic adventure" strand, which promotes a more black and white distinction between "good" and "bad", and "hero" and "villain". In Seaman's *The Defector* Judge Richards hears a case in which the eponymous protagonist is accused of murder. In a scathing assessment, he expresses his displeasure with the British secret service in general, and intelligence officer Sydenham in particular, suggesting there is not much to choose between East and West:

'I ask you, is our own behaviour here so very different to theirs, are these not two sets of similar, faceless people who think they can flout the law in the all-embracing interests of the state?' (1975: 89).

This is a viewpoint which Cawelti and Rosenberg trace back to Greene, who "allowed us to see that no side was distinctly better than any other" (1987: 196). Certainly, it is a perspective embraced by le Carré's characters. In *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, Control tells Leamas, 'I would say that since the war, our methods—ours and those of the opposition—have become much the same' (1964: 20).<sup>107</sup> Similarly, while it may have been part of his interrogation strategy, in *Tinker Tailor*, Smiley demands of Karla, 'Don't you think it's time to recognise that there is as little worth on your side as there is on mine?' (1975: 185). Berenkov, the captured Russian agent in *Charlie Muffin*, expresses much the same point of view from the other side of the fence: 'Look at us.

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<sup>107</sup> Willman cites the 1975 Senate Church Committee's report which reasserted the American principles the CIA abandoned during the Cold War: "The United States must not adopt the tactics of the enemy. Means are as important as ends ... each time the means we use are wrong, our inner strength, the strength which makes us free is lessened" (2022: 99).

Apart from being born in different countries and being absolutely committed to opposite sides, we're practically identical' (1997A: 284).

In part, this grudging concession of moral equivalence to both sides in the Cold War is a consequence of the growing disillusionment of some western intelligence officers with the regimes they serve. Thus, Naldo Railton, once an idealistic recruit to the secret service in *The Secret Families*, wonders whether his job is really worth it, given what he sees as the degradation of his country and the erosion of the values he believes in:

Honour, allegiance, decency, the law, essential knowledge between right and wrong, the freedom of the individual – were being ground down under new political ideologies, or presented in a propaganda drive aimed at making countries believe that weapons, and the warfare that could be waged with them, would be for the sake of the individual (1990: 284).

Similarly, when Cargill, in Rathbone's *A Spy of the Old School*, first joins "the Service", he still believes in God and the British Way of Life. But as time passes, he comes to see that God has withdrawn and the British Way of Life has all but disappeared. He has experienced "thirty years of political chicanery, double-dealing and downright treason" (1984: 133-34).

Not that idealism is completely absent. Perhaps because he is a newcomer, Thorogood, in *Legacy*, believes that the secret service can offer him "patriotic endeavour in a cause in which he could believe". He feels himself to be "at the heart of the Cold War" (2011: 70). Even Keene, notwithstanding his decrial of his colleagues as 'whores', doing 'dirty jobs', enters a defence of the West:

'OK, why do we do it? Because we believe in freedom of thought, of speech and of movement. Our way of life, like the American way, is imperfect – of course it is. But would you prefer the Soviet way? Or *any* totalitarian way? No, you wouldn't. Here we can criticize the government in public; here we can read what we like and more or less print and say what we like. Try doing that in a totalitarian state' (1990: 342-43).

As is to be expected, much of the harshest criticism of the West, and strongest support for the other side, comes from the double-agents and defectors working for the latter. Double-agent James Railton, in *the Secret Families*, and Keatley, revealed as a traitor in *The Spy's Wife*, both disparage the conditions obtaining in the UK, while talking up the glories of communism. Not that the latter view was uncommon. As Walker

tells Powell in Allbeury's *The Other Side of Silence* 'There were a lot of people in those days who saw a new light for the world in Moscow' (1981: 33). This is taken to be the case for British spies such as George Blake and the Cambridge Five, though In Banville's *The Untouchable*, Maskell, does not quite conform to this pattern. Having been revealed as a Russian spy, he is interviewed by a journalist. He talks about his 'hatred of America', declaring the 'American occupation of Europe' was a calamity, insisting, 'I did not spy for the Russians. I spied for Europe' (1998: 21, 22, 29).

Perhaps the most difficult moral question for intelligence officers, and one that has been thrown into sharp relief in recent times by the "War on Terror", is the use and limits of interrogation techniques. Naldo Railton, facing a stressful "interview" with the KGB, in *The Secret Families*, reviews in his mind the techniques they have at their disposal. If they resort to "full frontal violence" there is "the water, electrodes and rubber hoses", or, more likely, what they refer to as "chemical", namely, "injections of 'soap' as sodium pentathol is known, or so-called 'truth serums' like scopolamine" (1990: 291). That there might be a moral dimension to such matters is often glossed over, although a hint that this might be the case does occur in Hone's *The Sixth Directorate*. The British secret service has captured a Russian agent, George Graham, and is set to interrogate him. Croxley tells McCoy the process will take some time, potentially days, if not weeks. Without going into detail, Croxley refers to disorientation, sounds, darkness, and 'other physical – awkwardness'. The idea is to produce a cumulative effect and "Croxley was embarrassed even in hinting at this psychological violence" (2009: 60-1). In fact, the interrogation of Graham lasts only three days, but that is long enough for McCoy to judge that "those few days had done ten years' damage to him" (66).

One of the most extensive discussions of the moral aspects of interrogation occurs in Trew's *The Zhukov Briefing*, first of all when two SIS officers discuss the interrogation of a Soviet lieutenant named Krasnov. Tanya tells Liang Hui that she doubts whether the interrogators would be able to get anything from him. Her colleague disagrees:

'They'll get something. You know what interrogation's like nowadays. Not the old "tell us the truth or else". Much more subtle.'  
'It's cruel. The resistance course taught me that.'

‘Depends what you mean by cruel. It’s not a physical thing is it? An assault on the mind, yes. It can be terrifying and humiliating. It’s a risk we always run.’

‘Poor boy,’ she sighed. ‘Why should he suffer?’

‘To keep the world safe’ (1976: 163-64)

Tanya continues to question the ethical basis of what they are doing in a sometimes-heated discussion with the lead interrogator, McGhee, from Special Branch. He accepts that interrogation is ‘unpleasant’, even ‘humiliating’, but falls back on the old adage that ‘the end justifies the means’. After all, he insists, ‘We live in a tooth and claw jungle’ (191). He explains that the techniques used on their captive amount to an audio and visual attack on his nervous system: ‘The object is to induce a state of nervous breakdown in order to obtain co-operation – or compliance if you like’. He patronisingly dismisses Tanya’s complaint that the process is cruel and barbaric, telling her not to worry her head about it, explaining that ‘this isn’t a vicar’s tea party’ (190). They do obtain some valuable information from Krasnov, so much so that Grogan, one of the Admiralty Research scientists, claims that ‘this has been one of the most important intelligence operations conducted by the West since the nuclear arms race began’. However, his colleague, Curtis, while accepting Grogan’s assessment, maintains that the price paid is too high: ‘Reduces us to the moral level of thugs, child rapists, Gestapo sadists, anything foul you care to think of’ (193).

This section has set out in detail the tropes and devices utilised by Cold War spy fiction writers to maximise the “realistic” effect of their narratives. Building on Ehrman’s formulation, it has briefly considered how these writers attempt to depict believable characters and credibly evoke time and place, and accurately describe the detailed workings of espionage. The next section discusses how these writers attempt to make those narratives appealing to the thriller reader by the employment of suspense.

## 5. Suspense and the “Realistic” Spy Novel.

*It is axiomatic that thrillers need constant suspense.*

– Jerry Palmer (1978: 71).

Critics commonly characterise spy novels as “thrillers”, with David Glover, for example, categorising “the spy-thriller” as a “distinct sub-genre” in its own right (2003: 138).<sup>108</sup> For Palmer, while Ian Fleming is paradigmatic of thrillers in general, le Carré, and other writers at the “realistic” end of the spectrum, are variations on the same theme. He dubs their work “negative” thrillers, in the sense that in contradistinction to the stories of Fleming and his followers, where the ending requires the unquestionable victory of good over evil, the outcome of these narratives is much more equivocal, often leaving the reader with “a sense of unease”. Otherwise, the “Negative Thriller” conforms to the template of the thriller “in every other respect and in every fundamental way” (1978: 40-1). However, there is one crucial divergence between the “heroic adventure” and “realistic” strands of spy fiction which bears directly on one of the crucial questions raised in this thesis. It was noted previously that the more the approach of the spy novelist tends to the “realistic” end of the spectrum, the greater the emphasis is on the routine, quotidian, often tedious, nature of the intelligence officer’s life. Graham Greene, for example, wanted his novel, *The Human Factor*, “to present the [Secret] Service unromantically as a way of life”, with the intelligence officers “going daily to their office to earn their pensions” (1981: 227). On the other hand, it was also noted that the last thing such writers want is for their novels “to replicate boredom”. How are they to pull off this trick? Clearly, this is far less of a problem for those writers in the Fleming mould, who allow their readers to experience, as David Pascoe puts it, “a warming thrill ... a potent cocktail of sex and violence” (2019: 218). It is this “conventional violence” that Greene saw as endemic in spy thrillers since the mid-1950s that he wanted to eschew. But if we are to accept Patricia Highsmith’s formulation, it is the

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<sup>108</sup> Merry’s survey of spy fiction is entitled *Anatomy of the Spy Thriller* (1977); Clive Bloom edits an anthology containing essays on Buchan, Fleming, Deighton, le Carré and others called *Spy Thrillers* (1992); Priestman discusses Fleming and le Carré in *Crime Fiction* in his “Hero-Thriller” chapter (2013); Scaggs devotes several pages of his *Crime Fiction* to the “spy thriller” (2005); Michael Denning’s *Cover Stories* bears the subtitle, *Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller* (1987); Winks insists that spy fiction is “one of four kinds of what might most appropriately be called thriller fiction” (1993: 221); and so on.



presence of “a threat of violent physical action and danger, or the danger and action itself” which defines the meaning of suspense (2016: 1).

I want to argue that one of the main ways that spy novels aiming towards the “realistic” end of the spectrum solve the problem of how not “to replicate boredom”, is by the infusion into the text of as much suspense as it will bear. Put differently, to paraphrase Palmer, “all spy novels need constant suspense”. I first clear some of the groundwork in relation to the concept of suspense, before going on to explore how the writers under consideration here have set about injecting it into their narratives.

### 5.1 The Nature of Suspense

Highsmith’s formulation is not as hazardous to the prospect of the creation of suspense in the “realistic” spy novel as it might appear at first. In the first place, she is less concerned with the concept of suspense per se, than with what she calls the “suspense story”, defined in her Foreword “as one in which the possibility of violent action, even death, is close all the time” (2016: x). Secondly, she allows that “Every story with a beginning, middle and end has suspense” (1). There is an echo here of David Lodge’s insistence that “Novels are narratives and narrative ... holds the interest of readers by raising questions in their minds, and delaying the answers”. He suggests that thrillers, by putting their protagonists in jeopardy, are particularly capable of “exciting in the reader emotions of sympathetic fear and anxiety as to the outcome”.<sup>109</sup> He goes on to point out that the word “suspense” derives from the Latin for “to hang”, which has given rise to “cliff-hanger” as the generic term for the ultimately suspenseful situation (2011: 14).

Lodge’s formulation makes an implicit link between suspense and uncertainty. Robin Anne Reid is more explicit, arguing that “audiences” are willing “to tolerate a pleasurable state of anxious uncertainty” (1999: 437). This linkage is commonplace; in her contribution preceding Reid’s in *The Oxford Companion to Crime & Mystery Writing*, Rosemary Herbert defines suspense as “the state of mental uncertainty accompanied by expectation, apprehension or anxiety” (1999: 437). Cawelti argues that “suspense is essentially the writer’s ability to evoke in us a temporary sense of fear and

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<sup>109</sup> Defining suspense in this way bolsters Christy Mag Uidhir’s claim that “there is no genuine, distinct emotion of suspense”. Rather, suspense describes one of the ways “we emotionally engage with narratives” (2011: 162).

uncertainty about the fate of a character we care about” (1976: 17). Indeed, Aaron Smuts characterises the idea that the creation of suspense depends on uncertainty as the “standard account”, taking as its paradigm the theory set out by Andrew Ortony, Gerald L. Clore and Allan Collins (2008: 281). The latter view suspense as “involving a Hope emotion and a Fear emotion coupled with the cognitive state of uncertainty” (1988: 131).<sup>110</sup> Uncertainty, they suggest, is not enough in itself to create suspense, for there are many occasions when an individual may feel uncertain (they give as an example the possibility of a person wondering if it is going to rain) without feeling suspense. Rather, “the event about which the person is uncertain must have sufficiently desirable or undesirable consequences” (131).

Smuts rejects the idea that uncertainty is essential for the creation of suspense,<sup>111</sup> together with the notion that suspense is at its most intense when the outcome of an event is very uncertain and the stakes are commensurately high. That is not to say that uncertainty may not be involved, but rather that the standard account overemphasises its role. For, “if uncertainty is integral to the creation of suspense, then how is it that some films can still be suspenseful on repeated viewings?” (2008: 282). This problem, which applies just as much to the re-reading of novels, is widely characterised as the “paradox of suspense.”<sup>112</sup>

## 5.2 The Paradox of Suspense

Mag Uidhir sets out this paradox as follows (2011: 162):

- (1) Suspense requires uncertainty.
- (2) Knowledge of a story’s outcome precludes uncertainty.
- (3) We feel suspense in response to some narratives when we have knowledge of the outcome.

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<sup>110</sup> Suspense is not the primary focus of the work of Ortony et al. Rather, it is one among several examples of what they term “Prospect-based emotions”, which are “reactions to ... the prospect of an event, or to the confirmation or disconfirmation of the prospect of an event”. These reactions may be grouped into the two families of Prospect emotions: “Hope” and “Fear” (1988: 109, 112).

<sup>111</sup> Smuts is not alone in taking this view. Harold Skulsky, for example, in his critique of Kendall Walton, argues that the latter is mistaken “to assume any essential connection between suspense and uncertainty” (1980: 13). Palmer takes a similar line, arguing that in Fleming’s *Diamonds are Forever* “Bond’s victory is predictable”, but nonetheless “there is suspense, the cliffhanging waiting for confirmation of success” (1978: 58).

<sup>112</sup> Richard J. Gerrig prefers to employ the term “anomalous suspense” (1989: 277).

She goes on to make a “crucial distinction” between attempts to *resolve* the paradox and attempts to *dissolve* it. In the latter case, the claim is made that there is only the *appearance* of a paradox, brought about by an imprecision in the framing of one or more of the premises. Thus, Noël Carroll (2011) seeks to qualify #1, distinguishing between *actual* and *entertained* uncertainty. Whereas the former requires a person genuinely not to know the outcome of an event, the latter requires her merely to imagine that an outcome is uncertain, thereby allowing the three premises to be held true. Gerrig attempts to offer a more precise reading of #2, by positing what Smuts calls the “moment-by-moment forgetting theory” (2021: 4/7), in which he claims that a reader can both know how a story turns out and yet be unsure as to its outcome: “Even when certain knowledge of ... outcomes intrudes on the experience of a text, the reader continues to consider all outcomes as possible” (1989: 279). Only *operative* knowledge precludes uncertainty. As for #3, Robert J. Yanal, who, as we shall see, actually seeks to resolve the paradox, also offers a more precise reading of the premise. In brief, he argues that someone re-reading or re-viewing a work – a “repeater” – may have forgotten or misremembered the details and even some of the plot structure of a narrative. Therefore, he insists that #3 should be rewritten to specify that it is “true repeaters”, that is “repeaters who know and correctly remember a narrative’s outcome” who feel suspense despite their knowledge of the outcome (1996: 156).<sup>113</sup>

Resolving the paradox, on the other hand, involves denying one or more of the premises. Smuts, as we have seen, denies #1, in the sense that while uncertainty may typically underpin suspense, it is not an *essential* component. His “Desire-Frustration Theory of Suspense” holds that “the frustration of a strong desire to affect the outcome of an imminent event is necessary and sufficient for suspense” (2008: 284). Someone will only feel suspense if she cares about the outcome, if she has a strong desire to make it turn out the way she wants.<sup>114</sup> Yanal seeks to deny #3, claiming that “suspense ... can only be had once!” Suspense, he insists, is “an emotion grounded in

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<sup>113</sup> That *dissolving* a paradox does not “solve” it is demonstrated here, for, following Mag Uidhir, the Paradox of Suspense may be rewritten to take account of these objections: (1) Suspense requires *actual* uncertainty; (2) *Operative* knowledge of a story’s outcome precludes uncertainty; (3) We feel suspense in response to some narrative for which we are *true repeaters* (2011: 163).

<sup>114</sup> It may be noted here that Smuts’ formulation is not entirely out of kilter with the ideas of Ortony et al, who argue, as we have seen, that for suspense to be present, “the event about which the person is uncertain must have sufficiently desirable or undesirable consequences” (1988: 131).

uncertainty” (1996: 155, 157). In short, he argues that someone who claims to feel suspense on re-reading or re-viewing a work is in fact misidentifying her emotion, confusing suspense with “a state of anticipation” (157).

### 5.3 Suspense and Uncertainty

I want to suggest that aspects of Smuts’ theory point the way to resolving the paradox, but not in a complete way. In preparing this commentary, I have perforce read my way through dozens of Cold War spy novels, occupying various points on the “realistic-heroic adventure” spectrum, with varying amounts of suspense. In some cases, the suspense is of the cliff-hanger variety, where the hero is placed in a situation of mortal danger. The reader is uncertain about the outcome and thus of the fate of a character she cares about. But as Cawelti points out, this is “a special kind of uncertainty that is always pointed toward a possible resolution”. For, we know that the hero will eventually be saved, “because he always is” (1976: 17). Moreover, in my case, while I had already read more or less at the time of publication some of the books, such as Fleming’s, le Carré’s and Deighton’s, others I came to some time – often a long time – after their first appearance. Several writers have produced series featuring the same protagonist(s), such as Tute’s George Mado, Price’s David Audley and Freemantle’s Charlie Muffin. In these cases, a reader who approaches these books retrospectively knows that whatever the jeopardy, the hero must have survived to make it at least to the last instalment of the series. Thus, even though Tim Glister’s *Red Corona* came out in paperback as recently as 2021, by the time I came to read it, his second novel, *A Loyal Traitor*, also featuring MI5 officer Richard Knox and CIA recruit Abey Bennett, had been published. In the former, both Knox and Bennett face moments of extreme danger. At one point, Knox investigates his flat after a fire. Checking his kitchen for signs of a gas explosion, as he turns away from the oven, “something slammed into the back of his head, knocking him out and sending him falling, face-first onto the kitchen floor” (198). Knox is tied up, his mouth covered with tape, and left for dead. Will he be rescued, or will he die of slow asphyxiation as his nemesis, turncoat MI5 officer Peterson has planned? In the end he is discovered and set free by Bennett, as he must be, but that did not prevent this reader feeling a frisson of anxiety, a moment of fear. As for Bennett, she and Knox confront Peterson in a hotel room, where he brandishes a pistol. As

she moves to put distance between herself and Knox, Peterson shoots her. In fact, the last line of the chapter reads starkly “Then he shot her” (254). This starkness amplifies the shock factor. There is nothing to suggest whether she is alive or dead. In the next chapter, after Knox has dealt with Peterson, killing him with a makeshift dagger, he turns to help Bennett: “She didn’t look good. Her shoulders had dropped, her hands had fallen into her lap, and her eyes were half closed. Her breathing was shallow” (259). Again, the reader is unsure whether Bennett will live or die, and the outcome remains unresolved at the end of the chapter when Soviet scientist and potential defector, Irena Valera, picks up Peterson’s Beretta and shoots Knox in the chest. Some readers, who, like me, know that both must survive in order to appear in *A Loyal Traitor*, or are rereading the novel, still experience feelings of apprehension, fear and anxiety; suspense, in short.

How can this be?<sup>115</sup> First of all, as Smuts insists, the reader must care about the outcome, must, in this case, have a strong desire that Knox and Bennett survive. In the build up to these events, Glister has been careful to flesh out the characters of his two main protagonists sufficiently for the reader to invest in their survival and wellbeing. Moreover, it is clear that both are on the side of the angels, working to thwart the plots of traitors and turncoats.<sup>116</sup> Now, Knox and Bennett appear to be in imminent danger of death, and as Smuts points out, “Imminence gives a situation a sense of urgency”, which is often a key element of suspense (2008: 290n15). However, I take issue with the next stage of his argument. He goes on to contend that, in such situations, “regardless of our knowledge of the outcome, we can be frustrated in our attempts to affect the outcome of a narrative event”, which is the breeding ground for suspense

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<sup>115</sup> Of course, it might be that Yanal is correct and I have misidentified my emotions as suspense, when in fact what I feel is anticipation: I am looking forward to reliving the scenes where Knox and Bennett’s survival are made apparent. But, to generalise the point, as Smuts observes, rejecting the idea that repeaters actually feel suspense “would force us to attribute gross unreliability in everyday emotional reporting”. It would mean we did not have “any faith at all in the phenomenological reports of audiences” (2008: 283; 2021: 5/7). Moreover, as Mag Uidhir observes, Yanal’s theory of misidentification depends upon the view that suspense is a genuine, distinct emotion, rather than some combination of such emotions as apprehension, anxiety and anticipation (2011: 164).

<sup>116</sup> Not that a protagonist has to be on the side of good against evil to engage the reader’s allegiance; the success of Patricia Highsmith’s Ripley series of novels, for example, is testimony to that. From the spy fiction genre, one might suggest here the eponymous protagonist of Forsyth’s *The Day of the Jackal*, who is after all a paid assassin, or Freemantle’s Charlie Muffin who, strictly speaking, is a traitor.

(289). This formulation makes sense in the kind of example he uses as illustration. For instance, he argues that in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* members of the audience wants to shout out a warning – "Look out!" – to Lisa, because they know she is in danger from a suspected murderer lurking in the apartment. They experience suspense because they feel "utterly helpless and incapable of using [their] knowledge to affect the outcome" (285). It is true that we can easily visualise the frustration that the members of the audience would feel in these circumstances and in the other cases Smuts cites, but I would argue that this does not completely explain their feelings of suspense. Surely, what also contributes to those feelings is uncertainty, at least for the non-repeaters. Is the suspect actually the murderer? Does he mean Lisa harm? Will she be able to escape unscathed? This applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the case of Knox and Bennett. The reader is shocked when Peterson shoots Bennett; even more so when Valera does the same to Knox. The reader is not frustrated in her inability to shout a warning, for she had no way of anticipating the events that unfolded. The suspense, in these cases, for the first-time reader, comes from the uncertainty in not knowing the fate of the two protagonists; the reader may feel some frustration at her inability to affect that fate, but that is surely of secondary importance.

#### **5.4 Suspense and the Repeater-Reader**

Smuts' insistence, echoing Cawelti, that a reader must care about the fate of the characters, must, that is, be invested in the fictional world the author has created, is mirrored by Palmer. We noted above his proposition that the predictability of *Diamonds Are Forever* is no obstacle to the creation of suspense. He goes on to say that "suspense is certainly not dependent upon an uncertain outcome, since [the reader] will read and re-read the book with continued enjoyment" (1978: 58). The reason why the existence of an uncertain outcome, of unpredictability, may be relatively unimportant is that readers "vicariously live through the difficult situations" with the hero, engaging in "a suspension of knowledge". Readers "may know perfectly well that all will work out right in the end, but [they] choose to forget that while the action continues" (62). There is a parallel here with an issue raised in subsection 3.3 above. At that point, I made reference to Eco's proposition that in the Bond stories Fleming relies on a set of narrative conventions that admit some variance, but fundamentally tell much the

same story every time. He goes on to compare Fleming's work to a game of basketball between the Harlem Globetrotters and a local team. Given that we know "with absolute confidence" that the former will win, "the pleasure lies in watching the trained virtuosity with which they defer the final moment, with what ingenious deviations they reconfirm the foregone conclusion, with what trickeries they make rings round their opponents" (1981: 147).

We may extrapolate from Eco's formulation to the problem of suspense for the repeater reader. Yanal, while enjoying Forsyth's *the Day of the Jackal*, finds it almost impossible to imagine that anyone would re-read it, as it delivers "suspense and only suspense" (1996: 154). Yet, there are palpably other rewards to be gained from a reading of *The Jackal*. I previously drew attention to Forsyth's "painstaking description of the Jackal's methodology in establishing the bogus identities, and acquiring the props and accoutrements needed for his mission." These detailed descriptions offer a rich seam to be mined by the reader. Moreover, analogous to the Globetrotters' "trickeries" in running rings round the opposition, the reader of *The Jackal* may be captivated by the stunts the assassin performs to stay one step ahead of the authorities. In revisiting *The Jackal*, the reader might well, as Smuts suggests, discover details unnoticed on first reading (2021: 4/7), or, to recall Yanal's argument, may well have forgotten "many – really most – of the details, and even some of the plot structure" (1996: 156). In such circumstances, I would submit, there may well be at least a tingling of suspense as the reader, immersed in the details, worries whether the (anti)hero's set up will work and whether he will escape the clutches of Commissioner Lebel. Or, by now, the reader may have switched allegiance to Lebel, and the suspense is thereby generated, as Victor Nell suggests, in (re)discovering *how* the outcome is brought about (1988: 60).

The idea of "immersion" also points a way forward to understanding Kendall Walton's claim that "suspense may remain a crucial element in our response to a work almost no matter how familiar we are with it" (1990: 324). With regard to *The Jackal*, this translates as asking how may re-readers still experience suspense with regard to the two key plotlines in the narrative. Firstly, will the Jackal succeed and assassinate President de Gaulle? Secondly, successful or otherwise, will he be able to make good his escape? Of course, even the first-time reader will know the answer to the first question: that President de Gaulle was not assassinated is a matter of historical

record.<sup>117</sup> The re-reader will know the answer to the second question; however much of the detail she may have forgotten between readings, it is highly unlikely that such forgetfulness would stretch to such a key event. Yet, I maintain that on re-reading *The Jackal*, which I have done many times, just as in the case of *Red Corona*, I have felt suspense about the outcome of these events. Partly, this is due to importance of the details: perhaps in this case de Gaulle won't bend forward just at the moment the *Jackal* has pulled the trigger; perhaps the assassin will be able to reload before Lebel is able to get off a shot. On the one hand, the reader *knows* that neither of these alternative scenarios actually plays out, yet on the other, as Gerrig puts it, she "continues to consider all outcomes as possible" (1998: 279).

Crucial to this state of affairs is the idea alluded to previously that suspense depends upon the reader caring about the outcome of the narrative and investing in the success and well-being of the protagonists. In subsection 3.3 above I discuss the significance of empathy for the "realistic" spy novel. Lars Ole Sauerberg points out its particular importance for the creation of suspense: "In the secret-agent story there is a certain need for empathy, because even if the puzzle element is present, it is not so dominant as in the detective story" (1984: 82). If the reader feels little or no attachment to a character and cares hardly at all about the outcomes, she is extremely unlikely to experience suspense. But if the attachment is strong, it is possible for the reader still to feel anxious about what will happen to that character, even on re-reading the text. Knowing the outcome does not prevent experiencing fear and anxiety – hence suspense – about how things *might* have turned out. What makes this possible is the idea, drawing on the work of Walton, already discussed at some length in subsection 3.3, of the reader getting "caught up in a story", becoming "emotionally involved in the world of a novel". We "know" that the Jackal does not get away from the police, yet if we are sufficiently caught up in the fictional world, *fictionally* we do not. As Walton puts it, "advance knowledge ... does not prevent it being fictional that we feel suspense" (1990: 327).

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<sup>117</sup> It is possible, if highly unlikely, that a reader might not know until the end whether Forsyth was presenting a counterfactual narrative, just as, for example, Robert Harris and Deighton have done.



## 5.5 Suspense in the Spy Novel

Generally, spy fiction writers have four main weapons in their armoury in their quest to create suspense. Firstly, and this is especially the case for those at the “heroic-adventure” end of the spectrum, they can rely on the qualified uncertainty of the potential danger inherent in action sequences. Secondly, writers adopting a more “realistic” approach are better able to exploit an aspect of the intelligence officer’s customary duties – waiting – to create an atmosphere of foreboding. Thirdly, there is the inherently duplicitous nature of espionage epitomised by the “obsession” with the “enemy within”. Fourthly, the predilection for the detailed description of tradecraft provides the writer with the opportunity to ramp up the tension as the intelligence officer takes elaborate efforts to escape the clutches of the enemy.

### 5.5.1 *Danger*

In the Bond novels and others of the “heroic adventure” type, the subjection of the hero to life-or-death jeopardy is a defining feature of the genre. Suspense is generated, as Stefania Ciocia puts it, because “we do not know if [the hero] will reach the end of the story alive” (2015: 111). In *Casino Royale*, as we have seen, Bond is captured and tortured by Le Chiffre, who, having revived his victim by throwing coffee in his face, reaches to the table for his knife:

That is all, Bond. We will now finish with you. You understand? Not kill you, but finish with you. And then we will have in the girl and see if something can be got out of the remains of the two of you ... Say, good-bye to it, Bond (2006: 141).

It is not at all clear exactly what the threat is to Bond, or Vesper, but it is plain that something terrible is in the offing. Will Bond survive? Will he be terribly maimed or disfigured? In fact, he is rescued by a Russian agent, but the reader could not have foreseen this turn of events, even if she had expected that Bond would escape, somehow or other. At issue here are two of the key themes outlined above, namely the requirement for the reader to be strongly invested in the wellbeing of the protagonist, on the one hand, and, following Nell, in learning *how* the outcome is brought about, on the other.

Such life-or-death scenes are naturally far less common in narratives pitched towards the “realistic” end of the spectrum, although this is less the case with what

might be termed more “hybrid” works. Here there is a more obvious admixture of “realistic” elements and adventure sequences. Thus, in Braine’s *The Pious Agent*, Xavier Flynn finds himself engaged in a life-and-death struggle; in Sela’s *The Kiriov Tapes*, Quimper draws his gun on C and at one point his finger tightens around the trigger; at the end of Seaman’s *The Defector*, Russian agents seek to escape with the eponymous “Stevens”, attacking British agents in the process; and so on. However, even in narratives aiming at the most “realistic” approach, there are very often action sequences in which the protagonist faces danger. We have seen, for example, the jeopardy into which Glister places Knox and Bennett in *Red Corona*. There is little action of note in Francis Clifford’s *All Men are Lonely Now* until the traitor, Lancaster, is shot to death in an ambush in West Germany towards the very end of the book (1967: 221). Perhaps most famously of all, at the denouement of le Carré’s *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, the reader “watches” with her heart in her mouth as Leamas and Liz attempt to escape East Germany across the Berlin Wall. They are shot dead in the process. In all these cases, the outcome of the action is uncertain<sup>118</sup>; the reader experiences suspense as she waits to find out what will happen.

### **5.5.2 The Waiting Game**

Apart from these danger-filled action sequences, “realistic” spy fiction does offer authors a second opportunity to manipulate the narrative in order to generate suspense. There is something of an irony here, for it has been emphasised throughout that the quotidian duties of the intelligence officer do not necessarily lend themselves to gripping fiction. However, there is one aspect of the spy’s routine that may be exploited to generate suspense: it is typical of the genre that spies do a lot of waiting around, as intel is digested, events unfold, schemes come to fruition or not, and the opposition does or does not act or react. This is not suspenseful in itself, but there is one aspect of this waiting game that is likely to provoke tension and anxiety in the reader. That is,

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<sup>118</sup> That the suspense depends in these situations on the uncertainty of the outcome, not on the fact of the action per se is demonstrated by another scene in *The Kiriov Tapes*, introduced in subsection 4.3.2 above. British agent, Amory, is babysitting the defector Kiriov, when the doorbell of the safehouse rings according to a pre-arranged code. There is nothing to alert the reader to what might happen next, which is that both Amory and Kiriov are shot to death, and while she may well be shocked, she has not experienced suspense.

when an intelligence officer is waiting for *someone*, in particular when the officer is hoping to meet a contact or to welcome an asset trying to come over the border.

At the beginning of Deighton's *Berlin Game*, Bernie Samson and his friend, Werner Volkman, are freezing to death in a car, waiting nervously at Checkpoint Charlie in the Western Sector for an agent to cross. Will he? Won't he? Berlin is also the location for the safehouse in Littell's *The Company*, where CIA officers Torriti and McAuliffe wait anxiously for would-be defector Vishnevsky, codename SNOWDROP. They chat inconsequentially about the nature of their profession and the delights or otherwise of the city in which they find themselves. Torriti chain-smokes, gulps down whiskey and peers out of the window to the streets below. McAuliffe feeling "his pulse speed up" draws his Walther PPK from its holster. They behave as if they have been waiting a considerable time for Vishnevsky, but in point of fact, McAuliffe complains that "He should have been here twelve, fifteen minutes ago" (2003: 13-22). Most famously, le Carré's Karla trilogy ends in *Smiley's People* with Smiley and Guillam waiting to see if the Soviet spymaster will cross a bridge to the West. It is far from a foregone conclusion: he may not come and even if he does, there is no guarantee he will navigate the crossing without getting shot. The reader joins the two Circus officers in anxiously awaiting the outcome. Guillam doubts Karla will come; Smiley that he will be safe:

In his racing imagination, he saw the scene unfold: the last-minute discovery by Moscow Centre of Karla's infamy; the phone calls to the frontier – 'Stop him at any cost!' And the shooting, never too much – enough to hit a man a time or two, and wait (1980: 332).

Indeed, the very nature of the relationship between intelligence officer and agent creates an atmosphere of anxiety and precariousness. As Trosper explains in Hood's *Spy Wednesday*, "There was no such thing as a routine meeting with an agent in place. A spy's existence was at stake every time he met his case man" (1986: 22). This point of view is echoed by Franklin's handler, Sandor, in Marchetti's *The Rope Dancer*:

In general, however, the intelligence officer leads an exciting and safe life. Yes, that it is! A *safe* life. Now, that is what is different about the agent, the spy. His is *not* a safe life. He is always in danger (1989: 127).

Franklin takes this lesson to heart, later telling his new handler Yuri, 'you're a case officer; you're not an agent ... the penalties for failure are a hell of a lot different' (246).

Finally, Parker, in Sebastian's *The Spy in Question*, acknowledges that an agent "risked his neck" while he risked "nothing more than his posting" (1989:156).

### **5.5.3 *The Enemy Within***

The third avenue open to writers of more "realistic" spy novels to inject suspense into their narratives is not, as Gail McGrew Eifrig points out, unique to the spy story, but it is of central importance to the genre. At issue here is "the fascination we have as human beings with problems of the believability of accounts" (1993: 237). Spy fiction, more than any other genre, leaves the reader anxiously wondering whom to trust. It was noted above, firstly in subsection 1.3, and more fully in subsection 4.3, that betrayal, deception and outright lying are fundamental tropes of spy fiction. Hence, as Winks, McGrew Eifrig's interlocutor, puts it, "what unites all of the literature is a feeling of inward paranoia, that one can trust no one" (1993: 224). Hence, as was previously noted, spy novels inherently generate suspense by, as Boltanski puts it, stirring up anxiety in the reader who does not know what or whom to trust.

Duplicity and deception reach their apotheosis in treachery and betrayal. Spy fiction writers have been able to enlist real-life examples, such as the Cambridge Spies, to bolster this feeling. Thus, in Ian McEwan's *The Innocent*, British intelligence officer MacNamee tells the protagonist, Marnham, that "[The Americans]'ve been slow to trust us since Burgess and MacLean' (2016: 199). More picturesquely, in Gardner's *The Secret Families*, Naldo Railton's view is that in the eyes of the CIA the British Secret Service "was like a piece of gruyere" (1990: 25). But the most substantial accounts of deception and betrayal relate to what was previously designated as "the enemy within".

As we have seen, many of the more "realistic" spy novels involve a hunt for a suspected mole, or the recruitment of a defector. The general air of distrust generated by such novels engenders doubt and anxiety in the reader, feelings of suspense that are magnified by her apprehension about the consequences of the mole's betrayal, whether he will be unmasked, and above all what his identity is. In the classic text, le Carré's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the mole is operating within the top echelon of the British secret service. There are four possible candidates: Percy Alleline, Roy Bland, Toby Esterhase and Bill Haydon – 'There are three of them and Alleline' (1975: 128), as Control bitterly puts it. The meat of the narrative is the painstaking investigation

carried out by Smiley, with the help of Guillam and ex-Inspector Mendel. For the reader, the suspense builds up in the expectation that the identity of the mole will finally be revealed as Smiley sets a trap in a safe house in North London. By this time, it is probable that most readers would be fairly certain about who will turn out to be the traitor, but that doesn't lessen the tension as Smiley waits in the dark inside the house, Guillam patrols the canal footpath outside, and Mendel sits in a "tame cab". Smiley hears the mole arrive for a rendezvous with his KGB handler, Polyakov, who offers him a drink: 'Scotch,' said Haydon, 'a bloody great big one' (1975: 297).

For the double agent or traitor, the prospect of discovery and the consequences thereof, are a constant fear. In *The Rope Dancer*, Franklin admonishes his handler Yuri, asserting bitterly that when it was all over, the latter would be going home to a pension in 'Mother Russia', while he 'might be dead and buried in some prison graveyard' (1974: 155). The threat of prison is held over suspected mole, Sir Richard Austen, in Rathbone's *A Spy of the Old School*, where he is told by a secret service officer that he can either "turn" and be well-rewarded, or it would be 'straight to Parkhurst Top Security Wing and you don't pass Go' (1984: 233).

In the case of defectors, there are three aspects which may engender suspense in the reader: whether a defector will be able to escape safely from the security forces in his native country; whether a double agent who fears imminent discovery will be able to get out, fast, and make a new life on the other side of the Iron Curtain; and whether a defector is in fact genuine. In the first case, we have already seen the example of the anxiety felt by Smiley and Guillam waiting for Karla. It is because of the intensity of the anxiety in such circumstances that prompts Vishnevsky to describe defection to his putative CIA handlers, in *The Company*, as 'a high wire-act performed without the benefit of a safety net' (2003: 22). Thus, in MacInnes's *Ride a Pale Horse*, would-be defector Josef Vasek confides in his contact, journalist Karen Cornell, that he is frightened that he will be assassinated en route to the USA. She tries to reassure him that he will be safe, guarded on the flight, but he remains unconvinced:

Hunted men have been killed whenever they were known to be in transit. Their guards along with them. A bomb in a car, a bomb in a plane. The only safe journey is anonymous, unknown to anyone. No whispers, no rumours, no reported movements, no discoveries. *That is safe* (1986: 116).

Stories that include the second aspect, the fear of a double agent that he will be caught before he can defect, follow in the wake of real-life figures Burgess and MacLean, Philby and Edward Lee Howard. This is the situation that Maurice Castle finds himself in, in Greene's *The Human Factor*. Castle is sure that his time is up, that "the game was nearly over". For the rest of his story, the reader is on tenterhooks wondering if his contacts can organise his getaway before Special Branch closes in on him. Castle himself fears the worst. So, when the doorbell rings, he hesitates to go to the door. When he does open it, he finds that it is someone come to help, who takes him to a hotel near Heathrow. He is met there by another man, armed with a plane ticket and a new passport, and the wherewithal to alter Castle's appearance to match the photograph. Even so, although Castle has been transformed into a blind man with a crewcut, an acquaintance, Bilt, believes he has recognised him as he awaits the airport bus. However, "the blind man dodge" persuades Bilt he has made a mistake (1978: 258). Eventually, Castle makes his way to Moscow.

The third aspect, where the reader is kept in suspense as to whether a defector is genuine, or is in fact a "plant"<sup>119</sup>, is a common feature of spy fiction. According to Freemantle's *Goodbye to an Old Friend* "A defector was never accepted as genuine until at least six debriefing sessions" (1975: 49). After all, by their very nature, defectors are inherently untrustworthy. As intelligence officer Bristow says in *Pale Horse*, in reply to Cornell's question as to whether he trusted Vasek, "As much as I trust any liar" (1986: 258). Similarly, in Littell's *The Defection of A. J. Lewinter*, ex-CIA officer, Leo Diamond, asks Agency man – Harry Dukess – rhetorically, what he would do if a Russian walked into a US embassy claiming asylum: "[...] you'd tread carefully, right? You'd think of all the possibilities – you'd think about plants and double agents and a rigged defection designed to explode in your face" (1991b: 179). In fact, the whole narrative is centred around the question of whether a would-be defector, the eponymous American scientist, is the real deal. The never-ending doubts felt by the Russians about Lewinter's genuineness are summed up by Politburo member Avksentiev, explaining the situation to intelligence officer, Pogodin:

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<sup>119</sup> In Littell's *The Company*, the CIA refer to such agents as "black".

‘Some of us, quite genuinely, don’t trust this American defector. Our fears about abandoning the status-quo are reinforced by our instinctive doubts about a man who walks in off the street, uninvited, and offers us one of America’s most closely guarded secrets. We are inclined to mistrust him’ (1991b: 154).

Perhaps the most extreme example of a defector’s untrustworthiness is found in *Good-bye to an Old Friend*. The British Secret Service believes it has pulled off a major coup when the defection of Alexandre Bennovitch is swiftly followed by his colleague – Victor Pavel – also claiming asylum. Thus, they appear to have captured a very important Soviet missile-programme research team. However, in fact, Pavel, an expert in stellar navigation, has worked out where Bennovitch is being held and communicates that information to a Russian hit squad. The latter and two of his guards are shot to death on their way to Kent.

#### **5.5.4 Tradecraft**

It is the clandestine nature of the work of spies which in itself leads to the fourth route to the creation of suspenseful situations. They are forever looking over their shoulder as they go about their work, employing the techniques of tradecraft, including, as we saw in subsection 4.3.2 above, extreme countersurveillance measures – Moscow Rules – to stay safe. To take just one more example, in *Red Corona* Knox notices a very large man following him and takes appropriate measures:

Knox reached the entrance to Blackfriars station at the northern end of the bridge ... He made his way down to the tube and stopped in the middle of the platform ... A bright red Circle Line train pulled into the station ... At the last moment, Knox hopped through the closing doors ... Charing cross was next. This time, as soon as the doors opened, Knox burst off the train and sprinted down the stairs ... Knox reached the northbound platform of the Northern Line as a train was about to depart ... He stretched his arms out, jamming the nearest set of doors open ... He kept his eyes on the platform, watching the giant reach the platform too late to stop the train pulling away (2021: 133).

All these elaborate measures are not just the product of the paranoia that inevitably infects the mind of the secret service agents. In McCrum’s *In the Secret State*, intelligence officer Strange is carrying a briefcase containing important secret documents, but fails to see three men running at him from the shelter of a doorway: “The first thing he knew was a blow, painless on the instant, that sent him sprawling across the

paving” (1981: 205). How seriously is he injured? Will the gang seize the documents? In fact, Strange is rescued by the intervention of a newspaperman, Hoskins.

Further, intelligence officers are constantly in a state of anxiety about the safety of their assets, fearing their discovery at any moment. Examples are legion. Hood’s *Spy Wednesday* features American intelligence officers running a Soviet agent, Galkin, a KGB officer based in the embassy in Vienna. However, they learn from another KGB officer, codename “Kinzl”, that he ‘was arrested after we spotted him emptying a dead drop’ (1986: 67). The constant possibility of genuine danger is emphasised in Sebastian’s *The Spy in Question*, where double agent Anatol discovers a tell-tale chalk mark on the door of his Moscow apartment: “It was a signal with only one meaning. Get out. Save yourself” (1989: 105).

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This first part of the thesis, the Analytical Commentary I, has addressed the research questions RQ1 – RQ6. The next part, *The Cossack Variation*, is the full-length novel informed by the findings in the Commentary. It sets out to incorporate the key elements of the “realistic” approach to Cold War espionage fiction writing, while functioning as a spy thriller in its own right. The third part of the thesis, the Analytical Commentary II, reflects on the writing process and demonstrates how, as an example of research-led practice, the project makes an original contribution to knowledge and practice.



# **Part Two**

***Creative Writing Portfolio:***

***The Cossack Variation***



## Prologue

*Arlington VA, October 1983,*

Mitchell Masterton opened his front door, stepped out onto the porch and looked up at the sky. The local radio station had predicted a dry day, but Virginia in October was notorious for making monkeys of weather forecasters. Sure enough, the fluffy fair-weather cumulus clouds of the early morning had given way to a lowering sky. He turned and went back into the house, collected his briefcase and took down a raincoat from the rack. He called a goodbye to his wife and shut the door behind him. As he opened the trunk of his Pontiac Firebird, he heard a shout from across the double drive that separated his house from his neighbour's. A head popped up from behind a hedge. Bob Holloway waved a pair of secateurs at him.

‘What’s this, Mitch, going in on a Sunday?’

‘Well, Bob, you know how it is.’ He grinned. ‘Vital matters of state.’

Holloway laughed. Everyone knew that Masterton was a minor functionary in the State Department. Nothing important – just a regular guy. Sure, he maybe liked a drink a little too much, but where was the harm?

Masterton dumped his raincoat and briefcase in the trunk, sketched a wave at his neighbour, hung his sports jacket on the hook in the car and jumped in.

Bob was right; it was unusual for him to go in on a Sunday, though not unheard of. Where Bob and everyone else was wrong, was in believing he worked for State, though he was happy to have created that impression. In fact, he worked for the Central Intelligence Agency. So, when his boss, Benton Adams, called him to say they were needed urgently by the CIA’s Director of the Office of Security, he jumped to it.

To take his mind off wondering what had caused Joseph Phillips Baxter to have gotten his panties in a bunch, Masterton shoved a cassette in the player and was soon humming along to Mozart’s Spring Quartet. As the music soothed him, he began to ask himself whether he and Adams had been called in to pull the Director’s irons out of the fire, sort out some kind of clusterfuck. Maybe even get a trip abroad. Yeah, that must be it. He turned left into 35<sup>th</sup> Street North, on his way out of the suburb of Gulf Branch, en route for the George Washington Memorial Parkway towards Langley. As he approached Military Road, he realised something was up. At the junction, two cars had stopped, slewed across the road, effectively blocking his passage. Both were dark sedans. As he pulled up

behind them, he could see that there was no traffic on Military Road to prevent either one moving off. He honked his horn. No response. He looked more closely at the cars in front of him. They were identical Dodge Diplomats. Just the sort of vehicles favoured by the FBI. Fuck. What should he do? He could turn around and go back the way he'd come, heading for Glebe Road, which joined the Parkway at Chain Bridge. He gave up that idea, when, glancing in his rearview mirror, he saw two more cars, also dark sedans, approaching, both with their lights flashing. Fuck. Fuck! He began to try to control his breathing, inhaling slowly through his nose and exhaling with a long sigh through his mouth, just as he'd learned in the Lamaze classes he'd attended with Rosalita. He considered getting out of the car, but thought better of it, waiting to see what happened next.

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At the same time, four more Dodge Diplomats were pulling up outside Masterton's house in North Utah Street. Four men got out of each of three of them, three out of the lead car, together with a middle-aged woman. Two of the men fanned out around the back, while the rest of the party approached the front. Masterton's wife, Rosalita Campos Masterton, opened the door. FBI Supervisory Special Agent Cooper Jefferson touched his hat, then held up a sheet of paper for her to read.

'Ma'am, I have a warrant here to search this house,' he said, 'and to take you into custody.'

'*jDios mio!*' exclaimed Rosalita. 'I don't understand. What are you saying? Where's my husband? Let me call him. He's—'

'I'm sorry, ma'am. You'll have to come with us. You'll be allowed to make a call later.'

'But ...' A look of alarm crossed her face. 'My baby. Laura. What about my baby?'

Jefferson turned towards the woman standing behind him. 'This lady is from Child Services. She'll take care of your daughter.'

As he escorted her to the car, he read Rosalita her rights. She got into the car without another word.

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The cars behind Masterton came to a stop, also slewing across the road to block it. Four figures climbed out of each. All were wearing raincoats, four with hats, four without. Seven of them each had one hand inside their coats. The eighth approached the driver's side window. Masterton wound it down.

‘What’s all this about?’ he asked.

‘I’m Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge Paul Bettinelli of the FBI.’ Bettinelli showed his identification. ‘Please step out of the car, Mr Masterton.’

‘Wait! Do you ...’ Then the realisation that the agent had called him by name hit him. His stomach turned over. He got out of the car.

‘Please turn around and place your hands on the roof of the car,’ said Bettinelli.

‘But ...’ Masterton complied. Bettinelli frisked him, efficiently, but not roughly.

Masterton half-turned his head towards him. ‘Look, there must be some mistake. You know my name. You must know I’m a CIA agent. I—’

‘I know who and what you are. Please put your hands behind your back.’

‘Come on! I—’

‘Don’t make me ask you again.’

Bettinelli handcuffed him and led him toward one of the cars at the junction. He started to read him his rights. ‘Mitchell Masterton, I am arresting you on suspicion of espionage. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say ...’

‘What the fuck!’ shouted Masterton. ‘Espionage! Are you out of your mind? I ...’

It was only then that he realised he recognised one of the raincoated figures. Staring at him with what he interpreted as a look of triumph on her face was Senior Special Agent Mel O’Rourke.

Bettinelli shoved him in the back of the car, getting in beside him, O’Rourke clambering in the other side. The car turned left onto Military Road. Still en route for the Parkway, but headed not for Langley, but the FBI Virginia Field Office at Tysons Corner. Masterton, in between the two agents, turned towards O’Rourke.

‘Come on, Mel,’ he blurted, ‘you know me. Good ol’ Mitch. This has to be some kind of mistake. Get what I’m saying?’

O’Rourke said nothing. There was no mistake. Mitchell Masterton was a traitor, pure and simple. All that was left to find out was how could a middle-class American, apparently just a regular guy, sell out his country to the KGB, causing the deaths of a score or more of agents. Why? That was the question.



**Part I**  
***Opening***





## Chapter One

*Helsinki, October 1981*

Michael Green first met Mitchell Masterton at a farewell party at the American Embassy. It was just up the road from his own embassy, on Itäinen Puistotie, in the south-east of the city. After two years as the liaison officer with the CIA for the Secret Intelligence Service, aka MI6, he'd been there often enough. Most agents would have been delighted to be posted to Paris, Rome or Berlin and they would have given their eye teeth for New York or Washington DC. If truth be told, that's how he'd felt too. But Helsinki was his first permanent assignment (for people in his line of work, 'permanent' was a relative term; it just meant anything that wasn't strictly time-limited), so he couldn't complain. The fact was, Helsinki was a nice place to live. The people were friendly: if you spoke to anyone who didn't speak English, they'd go and find someone who did. Capital city it might be, but really, it was just a small town. Small enough to be able to get around comfortably on foot. Yes, the winters could be brutal, even for someone from the north of England. But Helsinki had another saving grace: because of its proximity to the Soviet Union, it attracted more than its fair share of spooks among the staff of the various diplomatic missions. After all, it might have happened nearly twenty years ago, but neither Green or anyone else had forgotten that it was in this city that Anatoliy Golitsyn, a KGB officer, had walked out into the December snow and into the arms of the CIA. Golitsyn went on to provide gold dust for both the American and British intelligence services. So, Helsinki offered plenty for a young, ambitious secret service officer to get his teeth into.

He'd only been in the embassy ballroom a couple of times. It was, to his eyes, an extraordinary room, quite out of character with the rest of the compound, which was mainly modern and functional. It was huge, about the size of half a smallish football pitch (proper football, not gridiron) and had a distinct antebellum feel to it. There was an open staircase sweeping down from the floor above, and ornate plasterwork decorating the walls and ceiling, with enormous chandeliers creating elaborate centrepieces. The perfect finishing touch would have been for them to be lit by candles, or even gaslights, but of course electric bulbs did the job. Along one long wall were framed photographs of American presidents, including the recently inaugurated Ronald Reagan. Half of the other wall was taken up by a polished mahogany bar, staffed by white-jacketed waiters, mainly black

or Latino. Leather armchairs and sofas formed a horseshoe in front. Looking round, he saw that waitresses in black waistcoats and skirts were discreetly working the crowd, offering flutes of champagne from silver trays. At the far end of the ballroom, where high-arched windows were framed by heavy dark green velvet drapes, a piano-bass-drums-sax combo perched on a dais playing Gershwin, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, and Rogers and Hammerstein. The music was not to Green's taste, but he recognised it as the choice of the departing Ambassador, McRae O'Brien, who was returning to the States after three years in post. And, to be fair, it had enticed a few couples to take to the dance floor in front of the band, though most of the guests were clustered around the bar, some seated in the horseshoe, more standing.

The Brits were out in force, with top embassy staff putting in an appearance, including their own ambassador, Sir Andrew Millington, and Green's head of section, the Cultural Attaché, Peter Forbes-Etherington. In theory, Green was there as his assistant. In practice, his job was to run his eye over any new talent on view. To that end, he made his way through the crowd of people drinking and smoking, many of whom he knew to some degree or other. It was, indeed, a small town. He stopped here and there for a brief chat, not really wanting to get embroiled in any of the heavy drinking sessions often involved in dos of this kind. But as he steered his way through the throng, he felt a brawny arm clap around his shoulder and there was Walter Koslowski, his opposite number in the CIA, pulling him nearer and telling him a joke. It was something about Jimmy Carter and *Playboy*, but he couldn't hear all that well because of the buzz of conversation around them. Green laughed dutifully, promised to catch up with Koslowski later and turned away. Declining to take a glass of champagne from a passing waitress, he was heading for the bar, when he was waylaid again, this time by the Belgian diplomat Julius de Jonghe. He laid a hand on Green's arm, pulling him away from the crowd. He didn't resist. De Jonghe had taken him under his wing when he first arrived. Approaching seventy, he was a Helsinki institution. Although he wasn't in the intelligence business, he should have been: he knew everything and everyone. He claimed to be related to a famous old aristocratic Flemish family, and that may even have been true. Certainly, he had an obsession with royalty in general and the British monarchy in particular. At any rate, he wanted to talk to Green about the wedding of Prince Charles to Lady Di, which was still a hot topic a couple of months later.

‘Sorry, Julius,’ Green said, ‘I think my invitation got lost in the post.’

‘Really, *mon cher*, anyone would think you weren’t a true patriot.’

‘Well, just let me get to the bar and after a few beers, I’ll sing “God Save the Queen” for you. Just the first verse, obviously; no one knows the rest.’

As he made to move on, de Jonghe grabbed his arm again. ‘Look over there, Michel.’ He nodded towards a little circle of Americans, which included an old friend of Green’s – actually more than that on a couple of occasions – Ellen Davidson, one of O’Brien’s top aides.

‘Looks like some fresh meat,’ de Jonghe said.

His attention was focused on a man Green had never seen before, clearly a new arrival. Green looked at him with interest. He was a chain-smoker and seemed to have the same attitude to booze, securing a fresh glass of champagne as soon as the current one was empty. He flirted a little bit with the waitresses, too. All useful information to be filed away for a rainy day.

‘CIA?’ Green asked de Jonghe.

He raised an eyebrow. ‘*Bien sûr*. But not exactly standard issue, would you say?’

Green laughed. ‘No, not standard issue, that’s for sure. Who is he?’

‘I am told he’s called Mitchell Masterton. He’s part of the trade delegation.’ De Jonghe made quotation marks gestures with his fingers.

Mitchell Masterton certainly didn’t look like Green’s idea of a typical Langley graduate. Sure, he was wearing a regulation navy-blue suit, with a white oxford shirt, and a navy-blue tie with subtle pale blue inflections. So far, so Company Man. But his bush of curly hair down to his collar, Zapata moustache, wide sideburns and John Lennon glasses, gave Green more the impression of a Pol Sci professor at Berkeley. He was a tall man, a couple of inches taller than Green and therefore a little over six feet. Green estimated his age at around thirty-eight.

Masterton may have been the new guy, but he was in full flow, obviously spinning a yarn to the group around him, who seemed delighted with his anecdotes. De Jonghe slapped Green on the shoulder and wandered off. Green took up position leaning on one end of the bar. The barman poured him a Budweiser, not the insipid American version, but the proper Czech variety. Green wondered whether it would still be available when the new Ambassador took over.

Davidson spotted Green and waved him over. No one else took any notice of him as Masterton continued to hold his audience in thrall. Green had arrived just in time to hear him start a new story.

‘Of course,’ Masterton said, waving his arms in the general direction of his listeners, ‘you know why Mac O’Brien is going home, don’t you?’

No one responded straightaway, as people shifted a little uncomfortably. Then Davidson spoke up.

‘Sure. He was appointed by Carter.’ She shrugged. ‘It’s just part of the normal churn that you get with a new president. And anyway, he’s been here three years.’

Masterton shook his head. ‘That’s what they want you to believe, but it’s not the whole story.’

‘Really?’ said Davidson. ‘What *is* the whole story, Obi-Wan?’

He smiled condescendingly, ignoring the dig.

‘The fact is that on his last trip back to DC, your boss had one too many in the Round Robin and declared, and I quote, “Actors? Really? Nancy sucked even more than her old man”. Someone snitched, and *hey presto*, the sack.’

There was a ripple of laughter, followed by an embarrassed silence. Green came to learn later that this was typical of good ol’ Mitch Masterton: never let the truth get in the way of a good story. Taking advantage of the lull in the conversation, Davidson introduced Green to him.

‘Mitch, this is Michael Green. He’s quite bright for a Brit. Michael, this is Mitch Masterton, he’s the newest recruit to our trade delegation.’

Green wasn’t surprised to hear Masterton’s ostensible job title. As de Jonghe had intimated, the post of trade adviser, like Green’s own in cultural relations, was typical cover for spooks. That nominal role gave him licence to go out and about in the city, to concerts, the ballet, exhibition openings, parties, and what have you, where at times it seemed to him as if as many as half the assembled throng were involved in clandestine activities of one sort or another. On those occasions, in normal times, friends and enemies could mingle with impunity. It wasn’t always clear to Green into which of those two categories he should fit the ‘Cousins’ from across the pond. Not that these were normal times. After years of *détente*, relations between East and West had become decidedly

frosty again. The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan had provoked trade sanctions by the USA and a boycott of the Moscow Olympic Games.

The circle around Masterton had no interest in Green and began to drift away. Masterton grabbed Green's hand and shook it.

'Good to meet you, Michael,' he said. 'Mike? Micky?'

Green smiled. 'Michael is fine. You've chosen an interesting time to come to Finland, haven't you, Mitch? There's a lot of talk about the Finns following the Danes and joining the EEC. That would make a big difference to the US, wouldn't it?'

Masterton stared at him, his mouth opening and closing with no sound coming out. It was a trick question, but Green knew it should have been meat and drink for someone supposedly an expert in trade matters. Just as it looked as if Davidson was going to jump in to bail him out, Masterton recovered his composure.

'Sorry, Michael, wasn't sure I heard you right. I don't think it's going to happen any-time soon. The Finns aren't ready. Hell, it'll be a few years yet before they become a full member of EFTA.' He turned over a hand. 'Don't know that it makes much difference, anyway. They like doing business with us. We help keep the Russian bear from their door. Get what I'm saying?'

It was a good save. 'I do. I'm sure you're right.'

He chuckled. 'So, Michael, I guess you were checking me out, huh? Sort of like an opening gambit. Am I right?'

Green held up his hands. 'Guilty as charged. Time for me to retreat, perhaps. Marshal my pieces.'

Masterton looked at him appraisingly. 'You play?'

'Not as much as I used to,' Green said. 'But, yeah, I still play.'

'Where?'

'There's a chess club in town, on Aleksanterinkatu.'

'What about before? Did you play at university?'

He nodded.

'Oxford or Cambridge?'

Green grinned. 'Neither. Manchester.'

Masterton looked surprised. 'Really? What was your major? No, hang on. That's not right, is it?' He pursed his lips, then clicked his fingers. 'Got it! What did you *read*? That's what you guys say, isn't it?'

'I don't. I studied Russian and Politics. What about you?'

'Math. At MIT.'

'Ah. Some decent chess players there, I imagine.'

He nodded. 'A few. In fact, ...'

He trailed off, staring over Green's shoulder. Green half-turned, catching a glimpse of a good-looking Hispanic woman with long, shiny black hair, in a dark grey trouser suit.

'Who's that, Ellen?' said Mitch. Green might as well not have been there.

'Who?' asked Davidson. 'Oh, her. That's, er ...' She scrunched up her face. 'Ah! Rosalita. That's it. Rosalita Campos de Montoya. She's something or other at the Ecuadorian Consulate.'

'Is that so?' said Mitch. 'If you'll excuse me, I need to visit the little boys' room. This bubbly goes right through you.'

He began to wander off but turned back immediately. 'Michael,' he said, 'let's fix up a chess game. Real soon. What do you say?'

'Sure, Mitch. It's a deal.'

They watched him go, weaving just a little as he made his way through the throng.

'Well, Ellen,' Green said, 'you've got a live one there.'

'Haven't we?' she agreed. Her expression was halfway between a grin and a grimace. 'I think we might have our hands full with Mitchell Masterton.'

After a little more desultory conversation, Davidson drifted away and Green went back over to the bar. He got another beer and continued to watch the guests. Oleg appeared. Oleg Aleksandrovich Tolkachevsky. Like Green, he was officially an assistant in cultural relations, although his facility with English often meant he was involved in translation and interpretation duties, but also like Green was actually a spook, in his case a lieutenant in the GRU: Russian military intelligence. He was twenty-eight, only a year younger than Green, tall, fair-haired and blue-eyed, a potential poster-boy for 'Soviet Health and Fitness Monthly'. Yet, he had become a double agent, run by Green, codename BOTVINNIK. Green's old professor of Russian at University – the man whose recommendation had led to his recruitment by the SIS – once told him that there were only three reasons why

agents turned: ideology, money and blackmail. With Oleg, it was none of those. True, he didn't seem to mind the money he was getting, and he was far from fully committed to Soviet communist ideology, but he had another reason. Love. He'd fallen – hard – for one of the secretaries in the British Embassy. It wasn't a honey-trap; the two had met quite accidentally at a concert and seemed genuinely in love with each other. The deal, brokered by Green, was that if he worked for the British for two years, and assuming his product was satisfactory, he'd be allowed to defect to the UK and his sweetheart would be posted back to join him if that was what she wanted.

Just then, Oleg was looking a little furtive. Green would have to have a word with him about that. He didn't look in Green's direction, but held his left arm by his side, clenching his fist and pointing his index finger down. It was a gesture he'd copied from watching a men's tennis doubles featuring Hewitt and McMillan during a posting to Paris. This gesture, which signalled that Oleg had left something in the agreed dead-drop in Kalvopuisto Park, was by way of being belt and braces, a phrase Oleg had seized on with relish when Green had taught it to him. Of course, Green would go and have a look for what Oleg had left for him later, but then he went for a walk around the park every evening.

At that moment, with Green distracted by his thoughts, O'Brien's wife, Abigail, sidled up to him, unnoticed. Green knew her much better than the Ambassador, from the many occasions she represented him at some function or other. She was in her forties, a handsome woman, her blonde hair shining in a neat bob-cut, her steel-blue eyes glinting with the merest suspicion of one glass of champagne too many. She rested her left hand lightly on Green's arm. The band began to play Cole Porter again.

'What a swell party this is!' she said. 'Enjoying yourself, Michael?'

'Abi! Hello. Am *ah evah*?'

They both laughed.

'Mind you,' she said, 'a little work needed on the accent.'

'I'll try to do better next time,' he said. 'Looking forward to going home?'

She grabbed another glass of champagne from a passing waitress and took a healthy swig. She made a face.

'Not really. I like it here. The parties, the concerts.' Her lips twitched. 'The agreeable company.' She arched an eyebrow. 'In fact, I'm wondering if I haven't wasted a few opportunities while I've been here.'

This was the booze talking, surely, nothing more. She'd never come on to him in the past, if that was what she was doing now.

'Cultural opportunities?' he asked.

'Yes, absolutely. Still, there are two more weeks before we go.'

With that, she raised her glass to him, turned and sauntered away, joining a little knot around her husband.

Green watched her briefly, then caught de Jonghe's eye across the room. The Belgian smiled; smirked more like it. Green thought he even discerned a wink. He shook his head, took a swig of his beer and turned to scan the crowd. He spotted Masterton in deep conversation with Rosalita Campos. She was vigorously shaking her head but was laughing at the same time. Fast worker.

Green noticed Oleg, looking much more relaxed, in amongst a polyglot group happily chatting away, in English, he supposed. He looked around to try to spot Oleg's boss, the Soviet *Rezident*, Vladimir Fedorovich Fedorenko. He wasn't difficult to find; he was tall, at least six foot three, with a well-built torso, but spindly arms and legs. Some wag – one of Green's colleagues at the embassy, he thought – had christened him 'Vlad the Impala'. He was tucked away in a far corner of the ballroom, hugger-mugger with Jean-Claude d'Arenberg, a senior officer from the SDECE, the French intelligence service. Green was intrigued. Still, it meant Fedorenko wasn't paying attention to Oleg's comings and goings.

Green was just about to finish his beer and call it a day, when Koslowski slipped into a space beside him, signalling the barman for another Budvar, and a Rolling Rock for himself. A big man, in his forties, he was starting to run to fat, but still looked like he could hold his own in a scrap. Green believed he tended to see their relationship, if that was the right word, in a one-sided way: the Brits were there solely to provide back-up to the Americans, should that be needed, but otherwise were to keep the hell out of the way. 'Co-operation' was a dirty word in his vocabulary, just one rung down from 'Commie'. Still, he was affable enough and decent company over a drink or two.

'Hi, Mikey,' he said. No-one but him called Green 'Mikey'. 'Having a good time?'

'The best, Walt, the best.' The band had segued into *Fly Me to the Moon*. 'The music's a bit "new wave" for my taste, though.'



Koslowski gave him a look, then half-turned and nodded towards Fedorenko, still deep in conversation with d'Arenberg. The Russian had slipped an arm round the Frenchman's shoulders and the two men clinked glasses.

'What's going on over there?' asked Koslowski.

'Beats me,' Green said. 'Maybe they're discussing the World Cup qualifiers.'

'Sure. Could be. What are World Cup qualifiers?'

'They're ...' He caught the gleam in Koslowski's eye just in time. 'You know full well what they are. Christ, I bet you've still got posters of Pele and Beckenbauer on your bedroom wall.'

Koslowski laughed. 'You peeked. Seriously though, is this the right time for fraternising with the enemy? Really?' He took a long swig of his beer.

He was right of course. But, nonetheless, Green said, 'Come on, Walt. This is Helsinki, after all.'

'Come off it, Michael. In times like these ...' He stopped when he saw the expression on Green's face. 'Okay, okay. Touché and all that.'

With that, he drank up, gave Green a two-finger salute, and wandered off. Green finished his own beer, and, glancing around, caught Davidson's eye and gave her a wave. He made his way out of the ballroom, collected his fleece-lined cagoule, hat, scarf and gloves, and left the embassy.

\*

Outside, dusk had descended and a light rain was falling. Green tightened his scarf against the evening chill and pulled his woolly beanie hat further down his ears. There were a few people coming and going on Itäinen Puistotie but they paid little attention as he turned into the park. He was certain no-one had followed him out of the embassy, but still took elementary precautions just in case. Moscow Rules, as he'd drummed into Oleg: another phrase he'd taken great delight in. His first destination was the Kalastava Karhu, the red granite sculpture of a bear reaching down to catch a fish, in the north-east corner of the park, only a few hundred metres from the American Embassy. Oleg would have left a yellow chalk mark for him. Nonetheless, he followed the winding paths, away from the statue. The rain was coming down more heavily now, and there seemed to be no one about. He slipped behind a broad oak and waited. No one. He doubled back towards the fishing bear, keeping an eye open for any movement. Satisfied, he made his way over to

the Independence Tree, continuing to pay careful attention to his surroundings. Still no one. Green bent down, brushed aside the bottom branches and after a little fruitless poking around, which made his heart skip a beat, found Oleg's package, a jiffy bag secured to the tree with Blu-Tack. He slipped it into his coat pocket, checking again for any surveillance. Seeing no one, he went back to the statue and rubbed out the chalk mark, so that Oleg would know he'd collected the package. After one last look around, he headed off to the park exit on Iso Puistotie.

As soon as he'd left the park, with the rain coming down in earnest, he walked the five hundred metres or so to his little apartment above a café on Vuorimiehenkatu. Retrieving the paper clip from the crack in the doorjamb where he'd placed it, he went in, discarding his outerwear in the hallway. Putting the jiffy bag on the kitchen table, Green went to the fridge and pulled out from the freezer compartment the bottle of Stolichnaya Oleg had given him. He poured himself a shot and sat down at the table, emptying the contents of the package onto it. There was only one item. Green hadn't known what to expect to find. Maybe something about the invasion of Afghanistan, or an update on the health of Brezhnev, who was rumoured to be seriously ill. He hoped Oleg might have some inside news about the rise of *Solidarność*, the Solidarity movement in Poland. Most likely, it was something prosaic about the latest KGB activities in Helsinki. In fact, it was none of these. There was a single sheet of unlined writing paper containing a coded message. Green smiled. Moscow Rules again. Getting up from the table, he reached over to the bookshelf above the cooker for his copy of *The Catcher in the Rye*. It was a Penguin edition, precisely the same as the one Oleg had. His message read:

22:

8:11:1/1:2:2/1:4:3/1:4:3/1:7:3/1:2:1/2:1:1/1:1:3;

2:3:1/1:2:2/2:1:1/1:1:3;

3:2:5/1:2:2/1:5:4/1:1:3/1:5:6/1:4:2/2:3:1/1:1:3;

2:4:1/4:3:1/7:4:1/2:4:1/4:3:1/7:4:1.

Green turned to page 22. Taking the first group, 8:11:1, he looked for the eighth line, then the eleventh word ('Pency'), and then the first letter ('P'). The second group, 1:2:2, took him to the second letter of the second word on the first line ('o'). And so on. Soon enough, a four-word message was revealed:

Possible  
mole  
codename  
TATAR

He sat back. Well, it was short and sweet, but no less devastating for all that. 'Mole' was another word he'd taught Oleg. Of course, there was a word for the cuddly burrowing mammal in Russian, but it did not have the same connotation of double agent or traitor that had leached into the lexicon of Anglo-American espionage, possibly originating from the pen of John le Carré. Oleg had been much amused by the term, but there was nothing funny about his message. The UK secret services were still reeling from the revelation of the treachery of the Cambridge Spies, among others. The existence of another mole would be a huge blow. More to the point, it would potentially put in danger the lives of dozens of agents.

## Chapter Two

*Helsinki—Tallinn, October/November 1981*

First thing in the morning, Green showed the message to Philip Norrington, Head of Station.

‘Shit!’ Norrington fumed. ‘Double shit! This comes from source BOTVINNIK presumably?’

‘Yes. He left it in a dead drop yesterday.’

Norrington studied the message again. ‘Doesn’t tell us very much, does it? A “possible” mole. No indication in which service he might or might not be operating. *Do* we assume he’s talking about us, rather than the Cousins?’

‘No way to know. Obviously, I need to see him face to face and ask him for more details.’

‘Do you have a meeting scheduled?’

For both their safeties, Oleg and Green met face to face as rarely as possible, other than any casual encounters that might occur in the course of their normal working and social lives.

‘Not for another month,’ Green said. ‘I’ll try to push it forward.’

‘Good. Meanwhile, you’ll have to go and show this to Walt Koslowski.’

There was a protocol to meeting Koslowski at the US Embassy. He intercepted Green at the reception desk and took him through the corridors of the older building into the newer construction and down into the basement. Nothing was said between them other than the smallest of small talk, until they reached the doors to the CIA’s Helsinki station. As always, a uniformed, fully armed soldier was on duty. Green didn’t know much about US Army insignia, but he’d seen the crossed gold pistols the soldier wore on his right sleeve often enough to know this was a military policeman. The MP knew Koslowski by sight, but still took his time to check their credentials before allowing them in.

Primarily, the CIA occupied one large windowless room, divided into carrels. It reminded Green of a newspaper’s pressroom or what he remembered of pressrooms from films like *All the President’s Men*. There were also three rooms leading off the main area, two of them offices, one for the Head of Station, the other shared by his section heads. The third room, at the far end of the main area, presented as just a solid wall with a pair of thick-looking metal double doors. Koslowski swiped his identity card in the slot by the

keypad and entered the code for the day. Inside, there were narrow tables along all four walls, and wider ones with accompanying chairs set out in a rectangle in the centre of the room. The two men sat at one end and Koslowski poured coffee for them both from a jug on a hotplate on one of the narrow tables.

‘So, Mikey, I guess you’ve got something for us.’

‘I believe so. Take a look.’

He showed Koslowski the decoded message. The CIA agent looked up sharply. ‘Is that it?’

‘What, you don’t think it’s sufficiently significant to take up your valuable time?’

‘That’s not what I meant, as you know full well. It’s damn thin, isn’t it? “Poss—’

Green held up a hand. ‘I know, I know. That’s what Norrington said, too.’

‘Well, he’s right. I guess it comes from your guy BOTVINNIK, yeah?’

‘It does,’ Green said.

Koslowski finished his coffee, extracted a fresh cigarette from the pack on the desk, lit it, and took a long drag. He waved it vaguely in Green’s direction.

‘Look, Mikey,’ Koslowski said, ‘you know as well as I do there’s been rumours about moles in the Agency flying about for years. Fucking Angleton turned it almost into a religion. Don’t mean it’s true, though.’

James Jesus Angleton was chief of the CIA Counterintelligence Staff from 1954 to 1975 and turned the Agency upside down in the search for double agents.

‘No, of course it doesn’t. And we don’t even know whether he’s talking about you or us. But BOTVINNIK’s been reliable in the past.’

Koslowski nodded his head. ‘Agreed. But it’s mainly been small beer so far, hasn’t it?’ He stared at me. ‘Unless you’ve been keeping all the good stuff from us. Eh, Mikey?’

Green spread his hands. ‘As if, Walt, as if.’

Koslowski pulled at his lower lip. ‘Okay. Let’s take it at face value. I’ll put out some feelers and see if the codename TATAR lights any fires. Meanwhile, I guess you’ll be shaking your joe to see what else falls out.’

Green nodded.

‘Probably,’ said Koslowski, ‘it’ll turn out to be – what do you Brits say – a storm in a teacup?’

‘Do you really think so?’

Koslowski sighed. 'No, not really. My gut tells me that we're in for a shitstorm.'

Green got up to go.

'Just one more thing, Mikey.'

'Oh, yes?'

'Tell your guy to watch his back. I mean it.'

\*

Green wasn't able to bring forward his meeting with Oleg. In an exchange of messages left in the dead drop in the park, Oleg told him that there was a bit of a panic on in the embassy and everyone needed to be on their best behaviour. He hoped that it would have all settled down by the time of their scheduled meeting. He had nothing to add about the putative mole; it was a rumour, nothing more. But if Green couldn't get to see Oleg, he didn't seem to be able to avoid Mitchell Masterton. He kept running into him in town: out and about for a walk, in the supermarket, at the odd bar, in a restaurant. Masterton turned up at the chess club on Aleksanterinkatu, a week or so after the do at the American Embassy. It was in a basement under some residential properties and well insulated from the bustling clamour of the world outside. Green loved it. It had the air of a slightly raffish gentlemen's club, with mismatched, padded armchairs and sofas in one corner by a small bar. There were a few shelves of books, mainly about chess, though there were some detective novels in English – Chandler, Hammett, Ross MacDonald – that he knew represented the reading habits of the club secretary, Ari Litmonen. The club wasn't men-only, though. Women were a minority, but there were two or three regulars who were very strong players. Much better than Green. A dozen or so tables were set out with classic Staunton chess sets, about half of which were in use.

Green played two quick-fire games against a couple of old friends, winning one and losing one, and was considering who to play next when Masterton appeared in the doorway. He looked around, taking in the rows of tables set out with boards and clocks, and the small bar at the end of the room. He started to make his way towards it, but stopped when he saw Green, waved and came over.

'Hey, Michael. How you doing? What's the score here? Can anyone just wander in and play?'

'Hello, Mitch. Not exactly. You can either pay the membership fee, or I can sign you in as a guest.'

'How much? How much is the membership fee?'

'Five hundred marks. For the year.'

Masterton frowned. 'So, what, that's about a hundred twenty dollars, huh?'

'Er, yeah, I guess so. Are you—'

But Masterton's attention had wandered. He pointed to a table in the far corner.

'Hey. Isn't that – whaddaya call him? – Vlad the Impala?'

Green turned to look. It was indeed Federenko, playing chess with a Finnish diplomat.

'Sure is,' he said.

'Is this normal?' asked Masterton. 'I mean, fraternising with the Reds?'

'Yes. If you think being at a chess club is "fraternising".'

'What would *you* call it?' Masterton unwrapped a packet of Camels, took out a cigarette and stuck it in his mouth. Before he could light it, or Green could say anything to stop him, Ari Litmonen appeared at his side.

'I am very sorry,' he said, 'but smoking is not permitted. Are you a member?'

'He's my guest, Ari.' Green made the introductions, then handed over twenty marks and signed the guest-book. Litmonen moved away.

'What *would* you call it?' Masterton asked again.

'Sorry? What?'

'If it's not fraternisation, what is it?'

'Where were you posted before you came here?'

'Rome. Two years. Why?'

'This is a small town. You're going to rub shoulders with the other side all the time. Can't be helped.'

Masterton pursed his lips. 'I guess you just have to be super-careful then. Get what I'm saying?'

This didn't seem to require an answer, so Green said nothing.

Masterton shrugged. 'Well, anyway. How about a game?'

Green hid a pawn in each hand and Masterton's choice gave him white. After a conventional, uneventful opening, Masterton launched a relentless king-side attack and by move twenty-five Green was a knight and two pawns down, and the game was up. They played on for another half dozen moves, but Green's position became increasingly untenable and he resigned.

They shook hands and Masterton smiled at him. 'Bit rusty, I guess. Eh, Michael?'

'Maybe. Or it could just be that you're a better player.'

Masterton laughed. 'It's possible. Come on, I'll buy you a drink.'

Masterton couldn't actually buy anyone a drink; the bar at the club was for members only, something Green was sure he knew only too well. Green ordered them both beers. At first, Masterton was a bit nonplussed that there was no American beer on offer, but he was happy enough after he'd tasted the local brew, Karhu. On the other hand, he didn't offer to give Green the money for the round.

Masterton gestured towards a little table by the corner of the bar and they took their drinks over to it and sat down. He took out his Camels and tapped one lightly on the pack, then leaned towards Green and spoke quietly.

'Listen, Michael, we can cut the bullshit, can't we?'

'Sure.'

'Good. I know who you are and you know who I am. Get what I'm saying?'

'I think so.'

'We can help each other out, can't we? I give you a head's up, you return the favour.'

'Meaning?'

'Well ...' he said, slipping the cigarette back into the pack, which he began to twist around in his hand. 'Maybe I know a few things you don't and you might drop a hint or two to me? Just between us, you know?'

'A hint about what, exactly?'

Masterton smiled in what Green imagined he thought was an engaging way. In truth, it merely made him look shifty.

'Come on, Michael, let's not be coy. Don't try to tell me you've been sharing every last drop of intel from source BOTVINNIK with old Walt Koslowski.'

Green was momentarily taken aback. 'You know about him, then?'

'Sure. It's my job to know. Who is it anyway? That pretty boy Sergei, who works in passports and visas? Or maybe the crypto is a double-bluff and it's one of those luscious secretaries whose legs go all the way up to the Urals? Olga, maybe? Now, in her case, I definitely would be up for a bit of fraternisation. Get what I'm saying?'

Masterton winked at him. Green shook his head. Before he could reply, Masterton had drained his bottle of Karhu and got to his feet.



‘Just think about it, Michael, okay? We can do each other some good. And thanks for the game. See you around.’

\*

Meanwhile, Philip Norrington had found Green a little project, about growing disquiet in Estonia, or rather, the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, just fifty miles away across the Gulf of Finland. There had been demonstrations in Tallinn and some journalists were getting excited. After the rise of *Solidarność* in Poland, every little flutter of dissent got blown out of all proportion. To Green’s eyes, the events in Tallinn looked like little more than student agitation and so he told his boss. Norrington had other ideas, and sent him off on the ferry across the Gulf of Finland to make contact with his asset, codename KERES. The journey took more than four hours, but possessing a diplomatic passport allowed Green to get through border controls quickly. There was a visible Russian presence, but not as heavy as the last time he’d been. Green’s cover was a genuine invitation – he was a cultural attaché after all – to a concert that afternoon of music by Estonian composers, including Arvo Pärt’s Third Symphony. Such were the delights of the clandestine life.

Green had enough time before the concert to wander around the winding cobbled streets of the old town. He made his way to the Kiek-in-de-Kök tower, then strolled through the Town Hall Square, Raekoja Plats, and back along Müürivahe towards the concert hall. The walk took him past a host of medieval buildings: churches, shops, private houses, and government offices, checking from time to time to see if anyone was following him, but he couldn’t see anyone. Not that it mattered; he wasn’t doing anything illicit. There had been a few students demonstrating in the square, marshalled by some Russian soldiers, in a surprisingly low-key and light-touch way. Green didn’t stop to talk to the protesters; no point in drawing attention to himself.

The concert hall was an imposing, neoclassical building, its Doric columns reminding Green of the architecture in Helsinki. He paid for a programme, then found the self-service café and helped himself to some rye bread, sausage, pickled cucumber, potato salad and *pirukad*, little pastries filled with pork and rice. KERES, actually a mid-ranking KGB officer called Juri Lapidus, off-duty on a Saturday, was there having lunch with his wife and teenage daughter. They didn’t acknowledge each other. There wasn’t going to be a meeting, but instead a variant of a brush pass. As Lapidus and his family passed Green’s table, he tripped slightly over his daughter’s ankle and dropped his wallet and his concert

programme on the floor. With everyone else's attention focused on the contents that had spilled out from the wallet, Green reached down and retrieved the programme, swapping it for his own.

Green read KERES's report, written in Russian and pasted into the back of the programme, in the concert hall toilets. Yes, he said, the events in Poland had provided a spur, but the demonstrations were nothing more than another manifestation of the Estonians growing discontent with 'Sovietisation'. One day, he concluded, they might lead to something, but that day had not yet come. As Green had suspected, the students soon went back to drinking, shagging and listening to David Bowie, and normal service was resumed.

\*

Oleg didn't make the scheduled meeting. Green wasn't sure how worried he should be. There could be all sorts of reasons to explain Oleg's non-appearance. The fallback was same time, same place, in a week's time. But Green did run into Masterton yet again. He turned up at a party given by Julius de Jonghe, who, true to form, had snagged an apartment in a prized Jugendstil block on Huvilakatu, only a kilometre or so from the Belgian Embassy. It was a remarkable building, with a spire on the roof, windows of different sizes – some rectangular, some pointed arch – little balconies with wrought iron balustrades, and ornate decorative scrollwork high up on the walls.

De Jonghe's apartment was spacious enough to accommodate the fifty-or-so guests assembled there. It was furnished fairly sparsely, but, Green knew, expensively, with several pieces from the Artek studio and lighting designed by Paavo Tynell. Or so de Jonghe had told him. On a long table with a pinewood top and stainless-steel tubular legs were laid out platters of smoked, pickled and salted fish, whitefish roe, reindeer sausages, blinis, rye bread and potato salad. To drink there was local and Belgian beer, Absolut vodka and, of course, champagne, all served by liveried waiters. Classical music, probably Sibelius, Green thought, was playing on the state-of-the-art hi-fi.

In attendance were senior diplomats from the embassies, prominent local businessmen and a junior minister or two. Green was initially surprised to see Masterton in that company, but he was sticking close to Milton Wiseman, so Green guessed he was there as bagman to the CIA Head of Station. Wiseman fell into conversation with Dieter Meyer, his opposite number from the BND, the German secret service. Masterton, spying Green, wandered over, glass of vodka in one hand, cigarette in the other.

‘Michael!’ he called. ‘Good, to see you, man. How are they hanging?’

‘Um, pretty good, all things considered. How about you? Enjoying the life here in Helsinki?’

‘Well, they keep me pretty busy here. Not much time for sight-seeing. Get what I’m saying?’

‘I think so. Still, at least you’ve got tonight off.’

‘Not really. I’m only here to watch the boss’s back.’

He raised his eyebrows and pronounced the word ‘boss’ in a way that cast as much incredulity as possible on the fact that Wiseman had somehow found himself in that position.

‘Why does he need his back watching? Do you think the Russian Deputy Ambassador, or the Czech Chargé D’Affaires, is going to pull a Makarov out of a shoulder holster and blow him away?’

Masterton laughed. ‘You’re a funny guy, Michael. It’s Standard Operating Procedure; the boss never goes anywhere without a shadow. Just happened to be my turn tonight.’

He stubbed out his cigarette in a nearby ashtray and knocked back his drink, reaching for a fresh one from a passing waiter. Green was nursing a Leffe Blond and took a sip from the rather fine crystal balloon glass. Masterton nodded appreciatively.

‘Your pal Julius sure knows how to throw a shindig. No expense spared.’

They were standing by one of the quirky pointed arch windows, in the corner between the long table and the wall. There was plenty of noise from the music and the hubbub of general conversation to drown out their own, but nonetheless, Masterton moved closer to Green and put his hand on his arm. Masterton smelt strongly of tobacco and alcohol. Green could see that his eyes were starting to glaze over.

Green expected he was going to bring up the suggestion again that they should swap intel on the q.t., but in fact he was in a more reflective mood.

‘Listen, Michael,’ he said. ‘Tell me: why do we do it?’

‘Why do we do what, Mitch?’ Green asked.

‘You know, all this clandestine stuff. We spy on them, they spy on us. What’s the point?’

‘You aren’t serious, are you, Mitch? There’s a threat of nuclear war hanging over all of us. We need to know what the intentions of the Warsaw Pact are, and what capabilities they have. That’s the way we keep the peace, isn’t it?’

‘Sure, Michael. Just yanking your chain.’

Just then, de Jonghe appeared, wagging his finger at them. ‘No, no, no,’ he said. ‘We can’t have this. Pouf! Two of our most eligible young men plotting together in the corner, while our young ladies remain neglected. Shame on you both. In fact, *Monsieur* Masterton, there is quite an exquisite little creature over there, asking for you most particularly.’

He turned his head, indicating a little group of women on the other side of the room. One of them was Rosalita Campos de Montoya.

‘Well,’ said Masterton, ‘in that case, duty calls.’ He pocketed his cigarettes, picked up his drink, sketched a farewell wave and crossed the floor.

Green wondered what he was supposed to make of their conversation. That was something to chew over later. De Jonghe put an arm round his shoulders. He said, ‘What do you make of the newest recruit to our little community? A worthwhile addition?’

‘I’ll take the Fifth on that one. For now, anyway.’

On de Jonghe’s instructions, Green mingled with the guests, renewing some old acquaintanceships, and pausing to chat with some local dignitaries he’d never met before. Green was beginning to lose the will to live, listening to the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce rambling on interminably about the state of Finland’s economy and the failings of the Government. Rescue came from an unlikely source. Abigail O’Brien took him gently by the elbow and, with the most charming apology imaginable to his interlocutor, steered him away.

For Green, getting away from the party and finding the way to his apartment was a bit of blur. He hoped they’d been discreet. He did remember what happened next. Abi was wearing a simple black dress with a set of matching earrings and pendant necklace. Everything was so understated, he was sure it must have cost a fortune. In fact, if her little gold watch really was a Patek Phillippe, as Green suspected, it was worth more than he earned in a year. Five years. She turned down his offer of a drink, which was probably just as well, as there was hardly any of Oleg’s Stolichnaya left. Instead, she slipped the black dress over her head, to reveal skimpy black lace underwear and a figure that a twenty-five-year-old woman would have killed for, let alone a forty-five-year-old, which was what he

guessed Abi's age to be. The abruptness with which she got proceedings started prompted him to expect that the sex would be full on, but he was wrong; she wanted to make love slowly and languorously. Which they did. At least, to the best of his ability.

\*

Green woke to the insistent clamour of the telephone. According to his clock-radio it was 3.37 a.m. There was no sign of Abi.

'Hello?' he said, stifling a yawn.

'Mr Green? Michael Green?' said a voice that was vaguely familiar.

'Speaking'.

'Sorry to wake you. It's Alan Mackenzie in Personnel. I have a message for you. It's about your Uncle Alexander.'

'I see.' He was wide awake now. He realised he was talking to the duty intelligence officer at the embassy.

'Oh? I presume it must be something serious?'

'I'm afraid it is. He's been taken into hospital in London. If you come in, I can fill you in on the details.'

'Thank you, I'll be there straightaway.'

Green began to throw on his clothes. He didn't have an Uncle Alexander. It was a code-name for Oleg. 'London' was code for Moscow. What Alan Mackenzie had told him was that Oleg had been arrested and flown to the Soviet capital.

### Chapter Three

*London, January 1982*

Christmas had come and gone. Green had enjoyed a brief encounter with a secretary called Alicia at an embassy party, but otherwise it seemed everyone was battening down the hatches for the Helsinki winter: long dark nights, sub-zero temperatures and constant snow. It was a relief to him to be summoned to fly to London. Not to visit his uncle, who after all didn't exist, but, he assumed, for a belated inquest into Oleg's disappearance. The bureaucratic wheels ground just as slowly in the world of espionage as in any government department. Agents got blown all the time. It was the cost of doing business. One time, in the chess club, Masterton had said to him that agents in the field risked their lives on a daily basis in a way that intelligence officers didn't. Agents relied entirely on secrecy, on living a clandestine life, living under the constant threat of getting caught and being taken down to the basement under the Lubyanka to get a bullet in the back of the head. Which, Green learned, was exactly what had happened to Oleg. He regretted having ribbed him for his obsession with Moscow Rules.

The fact that Oleg's fate was only to be expected didn't make it any easier. The remains of the Stolichnaya hadn't been up to the job. A bottle of Absolut, also gone now, had taken its place in the freezer. The question remained: how had the KGB cottoned on to Oleg as a double agent? Walt Koslowski had been unable to dig up any information about the putative mole, TATAR, but Green had to wonder if that was who had betrayed Oleg. If so, it narrowed down the field of possible suspects.

For a short time, at least, he put those thoughts to the back of his mind. Going back to the city of his birth after some while away gave his mind something else to work on. That's how he thought of London, at any rate. He was born in Barking, in the same hospital as Vera Lynn as it happened, when it was still part of Essex. So, technically, he was an Essex boy. But as far as he was concerned the county meant either farmland and chocolate-box villages, or dead-and-alive seaside resorts, such as Southend and Canvey Island. Or, nowadays, newly-Thatcherite citadels such as Romford or Basildon. Barking, on the other hand, just like its sister borough, Dagenham, was urban, gritty, working-class, an extension of the metropolis's East End. Not that he was guilty of any rose-tinted nostalgia. He'd fled Barking as soon as he was able, escaping to Manchester University. Nonetheless, he was a Londoner at heart.

In truth, Green's memory of life in Barking – at least the earlier years – was sketchy, to say the least. He knew people for whom images of their childhood were clear and sharp, a continuous visual record as if they had been preserved on a Betamax tape. His partial recollections were more like an incomplete jigsaw puzzle: a few of the pieces fit together to produce a fragment of the whole, but there were large empty spaces. Very clear, however, was the image of a child of ten or so, walking with his father up to Longbridge Road. The Jewish deli was one of the very few shops open on a Sunday and they went there to buy smoked salmon, bagels and cream cheese. This became a ritual and it was a long while before he realised that for most people, smoked salmon was a rare treat, if they ever had it at all. It wasn't that his family were well off, but his parents didn't smoke or drink, rarely went out to eat, didn't drive, and tended to take holidays that took them no further than a caravan site in Dorset. They were secular Jews, but food, particularly the food they had been brought up with, was the closest thing they had to a religion. His mum taught him to cook, which was later to grant him special status in the house in Fallowfield he shared with four other students.

The flight from Helsinki had taken three hours, but Green got two hours back because of the time difference. From Heathrow, he took the tube to Piccadilly Circus, then switched to the Bakerloo line. It was late morning, after the rush hour, and it was a comfortable journey. Century House was a short walk from Lambeth North Station along Westminster Bridge Road. It was an ugly, twenty-two-storey office block, towering over the neighbouring buildings. Its existence as SIS headquarters was meant to be classified information, but apart from the fact that Elton John was gay, it was probably the world's worst-kept secret. Green had heard that passing bus conductors – such people did once exist – would cheerfully announce the stop outside it as 'Spies Corner'.

There was an Esso garage at the base of the building, a genuine, functioning petrol station, not an SIS front. Maybe the powers that be thought its existence would help maintain the façade that Century House was just another office block. At any rate, it had been there for years. Green crossed the forecourt to the front door, pressed the buzzer and held up his ID card to the viewer. The door swung open. Waiting at the reception desk was a familiar face, a tall, spare man in his sixties, wearing a concierge's uniform. George Bainbridge. Once a field agent, he'd taken a bullet in a botched exfiltration op in Poland.

The bullet had shattered his right hip and he'd needed an artificial replacement. He'd manned the desk ever since.

'Morning, Mr Green,' he said. 'Not seen you for a while.'

'Hello, George,' Green said. 'How are you?'

'Very well, sir, very well. Can't complain at all.'

Green knew for a fact that his replacement hip had never properly settled and he was rarely without pain; some days were worse than others.

'That's good to hear. And Mrs Bainbridge?'

'Ah, that's another matter, sir. Her arthritis gets to her something chronic, I'm afraid.'

'I'm sorry to hear that, George.'

'Thank you, sir. Still, it's just the price you pay for getting on a bit. Can't be helped.'

He opened a large ledger and ran a gnarled finger down the page. It looked as if it wasn't only his wife who was troubled by arthritis.

'Let's have a butcher's. Who is it you're here to see? Ah, yes. Captain Waddington. He's moved since you were last here, I believe. You'll find him in room 1008. Just go on up, sir.'

Green turned towards the lift.

Matthew Waddington had the Finland and the Baltic States desk. He'd been a captain in military intelligence in Berlin after the war. Educated at Winchester and Oxford, he was, on the face of it, the archetypal secret service officer. In fact, Green knew that wasn't the case; he came from a working-class Lancashire family and had won scholarships to school and university. He made no secret of the fact that he had voted Labour in 1979 and believed the Thatcher revolution would prove a catastrophic mistake. Now in his late fifties, he was slim and fit, with a thick crop of brown hair, untouched by grey.

His secretary, Lydia, showed Green in and Waddington came to the door, grasping his right hand while putting his left on Green's shoulder. His suit jacket was off, the top button of his shirt undone, his tie at half-mast. He ushered Green away from his uncluttered desk towards a pair of matching armchairs over by his bookshelves.

'Michael,' he said, 'how are you bearing up?'

'Pretty well, Matt, in the circumstances. Time passes.' Green shrugged. 'And I suppose Oleg knew what he was getting himself into.'



‘Yes. Even so. You lost a joe. That’s never easy.’ Waddington looked at Green shrewdly. ‘And I had the impression you’d formed a particular bond with this one.’

There was a trap here. One of the first rules of running an agent was that the handler should not form an emotional attachment with him. Clear-eyed objectivity was the order of the day.

‘Not really,’ Green said. ‘I had high hopes for him, that’s true. But nothing more than that.’

Waddington looked at him for a moment, as if he was about to comment on what Green had said, but instead got up and went over to his desk. Opening a drawer, he pulled out a bottle of Bushmills and a couple of glasses. He waved the whiskey bottle at Green and when he nodded his agreement, Waddington poured generous measures for them both, adding a little water from a china jug.

Green took a sip of his drink. He found it a little harsh, with a distinctive aroma, which he couldn’t quite pin down. Pear drops, perhaps?

Waddington swilled his whiskey round in his glass, took a sniff, but put it down untouched.

‘Of course,’ he said, ‘no one thinks you’re to blame. Or at least, no-one who matters.’ He looked at his drink, as if surprised to see it, and took a healthy swallow.

‘Really?’ Green said. ‘Then who is?’

‘Come on, Michael. These things happen. Agents get careless, they—’

‘Oleg didn’t. He *didn’t*, Matt. He was cautious to an extreme. Meticulous. “Moscow Rules, Mikhail”, he’d say, “Moscow Rules”.’ Green shook his head. ‘That’s not how they got him.’

‘Okay. Then the KGB got suspicious.’ Waddington held up a hand. ‘Just because they do. *We* sure as hell do. Paranoia is not a failing in our game; it’s a pre-requisite.’ He finished his whiskey.

‘Good speech, Matt. I don’t buy it.’

‘Nor do I, really. Then maybe it was an accident. Happenstance. Or whatever the fuck you call it. You know.’

‘I really don’t.’

‘Someone saw him. Somewhere where he shouldn’t have been. Remember what happened in Warsaw.’

'Remind me.'

'One of our assets – Golowski, or Gorowski—'

'Golorowski.'

'See, you do remember.'

Green sighed. 'The Russians were having him followed, not because they suspected him – quite the reverse – but as part of a training exercise for new KGB recruits. They saw him leaving a dead-drop site.'

'There you go. And you can stop making that face.'

Waddington went over to his desk and retrieved the bottle of Bushmills. He topped up Green's glass and poured himself another generous measure.

'Come on, Matt,' Green said, 'you don't believe that. Say what you really think.'

Waddington replaced the bottle of whiskey and sat down, moving his chair a little closer to the low table between them, as if to prevent someone overhearing them. 'All right. You know the score. It's the elephant in the fucking room.'

'You think Oleg was betrayed. That someone fingered him to the KGB. Perhaps, this TATAR he warned us about.'

They both busied themselves with their drinks, not wanting to accept the unacceptable. Green looked up suddenly.

'Why not me?' he said.

'Why not you, what?'

'Why couldn't I be the traitor?'

'You could. In theory. But you're not.' He stood up, drink in hand and paced around a little, before turning back towards Green. 'You're broke, you haven't dipped your wick where it doesn't belong—'

'As far as you know.'

Waddington bowed slightly. 'As far as we know. And you have no ideological sympathies we need to worry about. Quite the reverse. What's more, you're a loyal bastard. It's one of your greatest faults.'

He lifted his glass towards Green in a toast, who returned the gesture.

'I'll try to do better in future,' Green said.

Waddington returned to his seat, once again leaning in toward Green.

'No, Michael, *you're* not under suspicion.'

Green caught the inflection in his voice. 'What are you saying?'

Waddington rubbed his forehead with his hand. 'It looks like we've had some corroboration of the existence of TATAR.'

Green, who had been cradling his glass in both hands, breathing in the fumes, looked up sharply. 'What?'

Waddington got up again and went over to his desk, opened another drawer and took out a letter. He gave it to Green.

The envelope, obviously hand-delivered, was addressed to 'The UK Ambasy, Vienna.' Inside was a letter written in Russian. It purported to come from 'A Senior Army Officer' from 'A Communist Country'. He wanted to meet a counterpart from the UK who was able to speak Russian or Czech. Green lifted his head from the letter.

'I presume he's Czech, then?'

'That's right.'

Green resumed reading. The letter said the writer would be in Vienna for a couple of days at a conference and would ring the embassy to arrange a face-to-face meeting.'

'Did he?' Green asked.

'Yes. He's back home in Prague now.'

'I see. And have we agreed to a meeting?'

'We have. But it won't be for another month. Apparently, he's being sent on manoeuvres. We want you to go.'

'Me? It's outside our sector of operation, surely.'

'It's been decided to resource this from outside the Soviet bloc. Someone whose face isn't known. Finish the letter, Michael.'

Green drank the last of his whiskey and set the glass down. The final paragraph of the letter outlined what was on offer: information about the Soviet Union's strategic intentions, troop movements in East Germany and the political situation in Czechoslovakia. Interesting and possibly important stuff, but in the last line of the letter was the kicker. It was written in rather formal Russian, but its meaning was clear enough to Green: the army officer had information vital for the security of the West. Information about a 'предатель'.

A traitor.

## Chapter Four

*Prague, February 1982*

Unlike his trip to Tallinn, Green did not have the comfort blanket of diplomatic immunity for his flight to Prague. He wasn't travelling as Michael Green, but as Maurice Graham, European representative of an American grain company. The weakening of détente had put a strain on trade relations between the Warsaw Pact countries and the West, but wheat was a significant export commodity for both Russia and Ukraine. What's more, President Reagan had promised to end the US trade embargo imposed by Carter as one of the sanctions following the invasion of Afghanistan. American firms were gearing up to re-open markets behind the Iron Curtain.

All this meant that there was a solid foundation to his cover as a businessman. It wasn't a complete legend and wouldn't have stood up to a deep-dive investigation, but Green was confident it would be good enough for that visit. The American angle explained why he wasn't working through the UK's official trade delegation, which he wanted to avoid. There wasn't a fully-staffed Prague station in place, but by rights, Waddington should have cleared the operation with the Satellites desk and Green should have at least checked in with the SIS officer at the embassy, but his boss insisted he should fly under the radar. They didn't know who was or wasn't under suspicion, assuming that there really was a traitor.

The border guards at the airport looked menacing enough, with their Škorpion 61 sub-machineguns, though the image was undermined by their old-fashioned, badly-fitting, sickly-green greatcoats. They looked hot and uncomfortable. Their checks were thorough enough, but no more than that. Green had a genuine visa and a genuine-looking passport. It was well-used with an array of stamps from around Europe. Waddington had got it for him, off the books. Green found a taxi straightaway and agreed a fare with the driver for half what he originally proposed. He didn't speak much English and Green wasn't about to test out his Russian, so the half-hour or so journey through the outskirts of the city passed in uncompanionable silence.

By and large, the view out of the window was uniformly grim, with modern, monotonous tower blocks giving way to rundown, much older suburbs. As they approached the city centre, he could just glimpse the spires of Prague Castle, perched on a hill in Hradčany. There was little traffic until they crossed the Vltava at the Stefánikuv bridge. Then

it was a bit of a crawl through the Old Town to the Hotel Národní on Nekázanka. It was a decent, 50-room hotel, just the sort of place for a mid-ranking businessman, located in the New Town, but close enough to the Old Town landmarks. The staff were courteous, spoke English well and booked him in efficiently. His third-floor room was a little shabby, but comfortable enough, with an en suite shower and even an old Sony television. Green assumed the room was bugged, but didn't bother checking out the likely places.

It was late Sunday afternoon, and a dull, grey winter's day. Green wasn't meeting the unnamed 'Senior Army Officer' until the next morning. He had time to wander around the sights of Prague, like any other visitor. He changed out of the suit he'd travelled in, into casual clothes, pulling on the fleece-lined cagoule, woolly beanie hat, matching gloves and scarf, and fur-lined boots that served him so well in Helsinki. Heading out, Green saw at the end of the road a yellow and white Zhiguli with "VB" on the side. There were two police officers in flat caps and khaki uniforms with red epaulettes leaning on the bonnet, smoking. He paused momentarily, but moved on, just another tourist enjoying the sights. They paid him no attention.

It was only a few hundred yards to the Old Town Square. Green didn't bother with any countersurveillance measures. For one thing, it was obvious where he was going and anyway, he wasn't up to anything he shouldn't have been. He did think about trying to spot a tail, just to keep his hand in, but he soon realised it was hopeless. There were just too many people about. The square, an enormous former marketplace, was full of tourists, from both sides of the Iron Curtain, he gauged. Green sat outside a café with a sideways view of the Astronomical Clock and ordered a coffee. It cost him an arm and a leg, but he was on exes, so what the hell. He could see more uniformed policemen, positioned around the square, but they seemed only to have a watching brief, and were doing nothing to disturb the sightseers. Green found the whole scene just a little off kilter: on the one hand, the atmosphere was no different from any popular capital on the western side of the Iron Curtain; on the other, you could imagine it wouldn't take much to find the security forces galvanised into action.

It would be good, Green thought, to wander through the streets of Josefov, the Jewish Quarter. Leaving the square and walking along Pařížská into the heart of the site of the old Jewish Ghetto, he was struck by how much like any other part of Prague it had become. Green knew that the thousands of Jews once resident no longer lived there, but he hadn't

realised how far the Ghetto's high walls, narrow alleys and cramped streets had been swept away. Instead, the usual array of shops, bars and cafés catered for the tourist trade. However, a cluster of landmarks remained: synagogues, the Jewish Town Hall, the Ceremonial Hall. They had been built at different periods in the life of the Ghetto and had survived the Nazi occupation.

Dawdling around, hoping to summon up the atmosphere of a Jewish presence long-since departed, Green found himself at the Old Jewish Cemetery, bookended by the Pinkas and Klausen Synagogues. He would have liked to go into the Pinkas, but it had been closed since 1968, because of 'damp'. Green's father had told him about it, more than once. In the fifties, when the synagogue was reconstructed and restored, the names and birth and death details of more 78,000 Jewish victims of the Holocaust were inscribed on its walls. Green wouldn't have expected to find any of his family names inscribed there: the Greensteins had established a significant presence in Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia, but not in Bohemia or Moravia.

Green stood outside the cemetery, looking through the iron railings. He felt profoundly moved by the sight of the sheer mass of gravestones marking the thousands of burial sites, arranged in layer after layer as the available space ran out. No Holocaust victims were interred there, for the cemetery hadn't accepted new burials for more than two hundred years. Yet, somehow, the perils of the Jews over the centuries seemed to be encapsulated by this higgledy-piggledy forest of headstones. Many of them leaned drunkenly, interspersed here and there by ornately decorated baroque monuments. Green peered through the railings to see if he could make out any of the names on the headstones, but he realised the inscriptions were in Hebrew, so turned away. As he did so, out of the corner of his eye he detected a movement. But all he caught was a glimpse of a stocky figure in a long leather jacket and matching baker's boy cap disappearing around the corner of the Klausen Synagogue.

Green moved quickly away from the cemetery, along Valentinská towards the Charles Bridge. Normally, he would have lingered to enjoy the baroque statues, columns and towers, and to watch the buskers, hucksters and pavement artists play tag with the police. But he wasn't in the mood. Beer and food, that's what was needed, and not in some elaborate over-priced restaurant across the bridge with a view of the castle. There was a pub he remembered from a previous night out in Prague as a student. It was an old-fashioned,

basic boozier, with excellent beer, cheap, tasty grub and properly surly staff. The cheapness had been a surprise, given its location two hundred yards or so from Vaclavske Náměstí – Wenceslas Square – on the corner of Vodičkova and Školska. Green wasn't sure it would still be there, but a saunter along the square would be worthwhile in itself.

After the incident at the cemetery, he took a few elementary countersurveillance measures. When he reached Karlova, he turned right as if making for the bridge, but immediately turned back on himself, then went round the block, before emerging on Husova. On the way to the square, Green paused a few times, ostensibly to look in shop windows, but looking round, he couldn't see leather-jacket, and no one else seemed to be taking an interest in him.

Vaclavske Náměstí wasn't really a square, more a boulevard stretching the best part of half a mile. It was still busy, students and tourists wandering around, visiting the shops and enjoying cake and coffee in the cafés, as trams and traffic ran along the street. Rather than go straight to where he hoped the pub would still be, Green circumnavigated the square, picking up an old copy of the *New Statesman* from a kiosk. A line of lime trees bordered the pavements but were not yet coming into bloom. All along the middle of the thoroughfare was a perfectly regulated flower bed. Not much was showing, but he recognised a carpet of blue-veined white flowers. Russian snowdrops. Well, that was appropriate.

The pub, Červený Lev, was still there, the battered Red Lion sign banging in the breeze. In fact, from the outside, it looked just the same as Green remembered, other than that the distemper on the walls had yellowed and peeled a little more. At first glance, in the dim light of the inadequate ceiling lamps, nothing inside seemed to have changed, either. You walked straight into the bar from the street and were instantly hit by the competing smells of beer, cigarette smoke, cabbage and onions. The wooden chairs and tables were not so much distressed, as anguished. Yet, for all that, the place was clean and inviting, busy without being crowded, with a buzz of conversation interspersed with laughter. The crowd looked to be mainly locals, drinking steins of draught beer, eating *chlebičky*, and playing cards or chess.

A young blonde waitress came over to take Green's order: a 'pint' of draught Gambrianus and the dish of the day, which unsurprisingly was *guláš* and dumplings. She was friendly and cheerful, happy to talk in English. As she moved away, and his eyes adjusted

to the gloom, he noticed that the old cracked lino of indeterminate colour had been replaced by new lino tiles in a black and white chequerboard pattern. And the walls had not only been repainted in duck-egg blue, but were hung with reproductions of paintings, presumably by Czech artists, not that Green recognised any of them. He hoped the improvements in the décor and the friendliness of the staff weren't to make up for a deterioration in the food and beer.

Reading his magazine was difficult in the dim light, so he turned his attention to the other customers, trying to imagine how different the scene would look on the other side of the Iron Curtain, in London, or Paris, or Rome. He couldn't. While he was trying to work out what that meant, if anything, the same waitress appeared, bringing his food and beer, wishing him '*Bon Appétit*' as she departed, only adding to his confusion. Green thanked her, saying '*děkuji*', which, along with *pivo*, the word for beer, exhausted his Czech vocabulary.

Green needn't have worried. The beer was excellent, the venison goulash outstanding: spicy and rich. There was no sour cream; perhaps that was a Hungarian variation. He'd just about finished and was chasing the last remnants of sauce around the plate with a hunk of bread, when the hubbub in the pub subsided. He looked up, and had to fight to keep the food down in his stomach. Two men had walked in. Both were below medium height and powerfully built. They wore long leather jackets, just like the man he had glimpsed at the cemetery, though both were bare-headed. Green was trapped. He cursed himself for having behaved so cavalierly, as if he really was a businessman enjoying some time off, rather than a secret service officer preparing for an important clandestine meeting.

All of a sudden, the noise level returned to normal, except for shouts of 'Josef!', 'Jiří!' and other exclamations of greeting. The chef-patron, a much bigger man than the two newcomers, emerged from the kitchen, added his own whoop of welcome, and wrapped each in turn in a bear-hug. He called to one of the bar staff, who reached behind him for a bottle of Becherovka, but was stopped in his tracks by a bellow from his boss. You didn't need to know the language to work out he'd shouted, 'Not that shit!', or some such. The barman replaced the liqueur, instead pulling out a bottle of Johnnie Walker Black Label from the top shelf and pouring three generous measures. These were quickly dispatched



after some raucous toasting. Another round was poured. Green thought it was a good thing he'd already been served his goulash.

By then, his guts had ceased flip-flopping and his resting heartrate must have at least dropped below a hundred. Green realised that the friendly waitress had returned to his table and was clearing away the plates. She was asking if he wanted another beer. He glanced at the mayhem at the bar. 'Why not?' he said.

## Chapter Five

*Prague, February 1982*

The next morning, shaved and showered, after a gallon of orange juice and no more than a quart or two of coffee, Green was ready to set out for his meeting with the mysterious 'Senior Army Officer'. Questions had been going round in his head from the off: 'What rank was he?', 'Was he for real?', 'Was it a set-up?'. And so on. The answers he gave himself changed every time he thought about it. At any rate, he'd already devised a code-name: PELIKÁN. Perhaps not the greatest Czech chess player ever, but the name had a ring to it nonetheless.

One thing had led to another the night before. The two newcomers, who turned out to be brothers, got into some serious drinking with the patron, their cousin, whom they hadn't seen in a long while. All this Green learned from the locals, who needed little encouragement to join in the celebrations and insisted he join in, too. Shots of vodka accompanied the beer, but taking his cue from the patron, Green drew the line at Becherovka. Having established his nationality, they competed to try out their English, though there often had to be a resort to Russian, which many of the locals spoke competently, if reluctantly. When the conversation turned to football, and Green opined that Josef Masopust was one of the greatest players of all time, his status as an honorary regular was assured.

There was, coincidentally, a link to Green's planned meeting with PELIKÁN with the afternoon he'd spent in the Jewish Quarter. He was headed for a restaurant in Vyšehrad, near the New Jewish Cemetery in Žižkov, to the east of the city, two or three miles from his hotel. In theory, it was a straightforward journey. Green rejected getting a taxi, straightaway, on the grounds that once in it, he'd be more or less stuck, and would be easy to follow. And it was not impossible that the driver would be an agent of the StB, the Czech secret service. Walking was an option, as were trams but, marginally, the metro seemed the best choice. It was five stops from Můstek in Vaclavske Náměstí to the new terminus for the green A line at Želivského.

This time, especially after half-scaring himself to death the day before, Green intended to take proper precautionary measures – Moscow Rules, as Oleg would have insisted. So, he needed a clear head. Hence the coffee and juice. Countersurveillance was always a trade-off. On the one hand, you made yourself a target for casual observation by any

passing policeman. By looking like an idiot, ducking and diving and generally behaving in a way no ordinary person would do, you ran the risk of drawing attention to yourself. On the other, he knew that if the StB were already on to him, if he didn't take counter-measures he ran the greater risk of leading them straight to PELIKÁN. Was it likely that he was being followed? Probably not. After all, the fact that his face wasn't known to the local hoods was the main reason he'd been chosen, but he couldn't take the chance. Oleg was a powerful reminder of how high the stakes were.

When Green left the hotel, the weather was dry, but cold and overcast. He was wearing his grey suit again, with a white button-down shirt and a slim navy-blue tie, together with the same outer wear as the day before. Equipped with the sort of attaché case any self-respecting businessman would carry, he set off in the wrong direction, walking quite quickly along Jindřišsa towards the Church of St. Henry. There were people about; it was a busy Monday morning after all, but no one was paying any obvious attention to him. Green paused at the church, apparently absorbed by the material on the information board, before abruptly turning on his heel and setting off back the way he came. A woman, pushing a pram and wearing a shabby winter coat, looked startled. Suddenly, as if he had a change of mind, Green swerved to his right toward Senovážná Náměsti, but before he reached the square, he turned left and dodged into a walkway, then followed his nose through some alleys between the buildings towards the main road. Green thought he'd run out of luck when his only exit between two shops appeared to be blocked by a link fence. In fact, the fence was ripped and he was able to squeeze through, coming out onto the pedestrianised stretch of Na Přikopé, leading to the lower end of Vaclavske Náměsti. Green froze when he saw a policeman on the other side of the street, but the officer turned to speak to a passing tourist and paid no attention to him.

Green didn't see the woman with the pram, or anyone else he'd previously clocked, as he made his way to the entrance to Můstek and took the escalator down to the metro station. He paused, as if to contemplate the remains of the mediaeval bridge preserved behind Plexiglass. According to a plaque, which was printed in Czech, Russian and German, it had been discovered during the excavation of the area. Looking round at the people milling around the booking hall, Green spotted a tall man, wearing a heavy overcoat and a fur hat. He looked away as Green's glance fell on him. Green bought a westbound ticket for Leninova as well as an eastbound one for Želivského. When he reached the

platform, however, he hurried to the way out, following the 'Východ' signs through a series of corridors to the second metro exit halfway along the square. Looking round once on the elevator, he saw no sign of the tall man.

Green headed towards the Muzeum metro station. Vaclavske Námesti was busy again, even more so near the station. People were milling around the statue of St. Wenceslas and the National Museum, and queuing at the two tram stops. He joined the throng on the elevator down to the ticket hall, stopping at a newsagent's to buy a copy of *Izvestia*, the Soviet daily. The headlines were about the arrest in Moscow of an alleged Mafia boss. Green flicked through the pages while keeping an eye out for anyone paying him too close attention. There were updates about the situations in Afghanistan and Poland. The Soviet Union was shown in a good light, but at a glance the articles seemed more balanced than might have been expected. Before leaving the shop, he swapped his hat for one of a different colour from his briefcase.

He still had his A line tickets, but at the booking office, Green purchased a ticket for the C line to Kosmonautů. Following the lines of passengers through the corridors to the C platform, he waited there for the next southbound train. When it arrived, he moved towards the doors, and, brusquely made as if to board as soon as the doors opened, but instead turned round, blending in with the alighting passengers. Together, they moved along the platform as far as the middle, where along with several others, he took the escalator down to the corridor leading to platform A and caught an eastbound train almost immediately.

Just like the stations had been, the train was clean and modern. Over the top of his paper, Green observed the few passengers in his carriage. No one rang any bells of recognition, but even so he got off at the next stop, Náměstí Míru, and got back on in a different carriage. Again, no alarm bells. He alighted again at Jiřího z Poděbrad, but this time stayed off, waiting for the next train. He got off at the next stop, Flora, but jumped back on before it moved off. The final stop was Želivského.

Green was as sure as he could be that there were no dogs on his tracks, but one more diversionary tactic wouldn't do any harm. From the station he walked down U Vinohradské Nemocnice towards the hospital. At the entrance on Šrobárova was a site-map. Of course, it was in Czech, and thus all Greek to him. Except, that's pretty much what it was. Just as in English, medical terms in Czech revealed their Greek origins:

gynekologicko, anesteziologie, psychologie, and so on. The map showed him a way round the hospital to an exit on Ruská, less than half a mile from his destination.

Green followed the pathway through the hospital grounds. If anyone was following him, they'd changed into scrubs. He managed to slip into the Urologická Klinika and out again from a different exit without losing his way or attracting the undue attention of any passers-by. And then he was out, heading along Ruská to Benešovská. It was a quiet, mainly residential area, less down-at-heel than other parts of the city. There were shops, bars and restaurants, and low-rise, low-density housing. The houses were old-fashioned, but in good condition, with well-kept, generous gardens. There were trees lining the streets and plenty of green spaces. There was little scope for any more ducking and diving, but maintaining a tail would not have been easy either. As Green turned into Šrobárova, he soon spotted the sign for Ladislavova Restaurace. He took a deep breath. It was just before 11:30, the time of his appointment, and his journey had taken the best part of two and a half hours. Moscow Rules. As far as he could possibly tell, he was clean.

\*

The restaurant's shutters were down and there was a sign on the door that read, '*zavřeno*', which Green assumed meant 'closed'. This wasn't a surprise, as he'd been told the restaurant didn't open on Mondays. He rang the bell and the door was opened almost immediately. Standing there was a big man, well over six foot and at least fourteen stone. He looked to be in his late thirties or early forties, with longish dark hair and a bushy moustache. He was wearing a red velvet waistcoat over a white grandad shirt, and grey corduroy trousers. He leaned past Green and looked up and down the street. Withdrawing his head, the man grasped him by the hand in a firm grip.

*'Dobrý den'*, he said.

'I don't speak Czech,' Green said. 'Do you speak English?'

'Yes, I am studying at school. Is wonderful language.'

'But not easy to learn, with all those adverbs.'

'No, adverbs good. Adjectives big problem.'

This ludicrous exchange was supposed to establish their bona fides. No doubt it had been scripted by some genius at Century House, who assumed his interlocutor would have been educated at Eton or Winchester, not in some backstreet school in Prague or Brno.

The man bowed slightly and opened the door wider to let Green in.

'You are Professor Gray-ham,' he said. 'Please to come in. I am owner. Ladislav Rosicky. My brother-in-law is in back.'

Professor? Anyway, the choice of meeting place now made sense. The door opened onto a short landing with stairs down to the basement restaurant. Like so much of Prague, it was slightly shabby, but spotless, with polished wooden tables and a tiled floor. The walls were covered in framed photographs, mainly scenes of the city. Lamps hanging from ceiling beams cast a pale glow. In the furthest corner sat a man drinking coffee and moving pieces round a chess board, trying to resolve a problem from the Prague daily, Rudé Právo. He stood up immediately and came round the table to greet Green. Nearly as tall as Rosicky, he was as slim as his brother-in-law was broad. He was clean-shaven and his light brown hair was short and neatly combed, with the merest touch of grey at the temples. Green estimated him to be about fifty. His navy-blue suit was very well cut; Green was glad he'd decided to wear his. Also offering a firm handshake, the man introduced himself as Pavel Souček, gesturing Green to join him at his table. Rosicky brought over more coffee and a cup for Green, then disappeared.

'It's not bad, is it?' said Souček in Russian. 'Ladislav gets it on the black market.'

'No,' Green said, draining his cup, 'it's very good'.

Souček took out a packet of Marlboros from his jacket pocket and offered Green one, which he declined. Taking one for himself and tapping it on the pack, Souček rolled it in his fingers, examining the filter-tip, as if he'd never seen one before. Finally, he lit up.

'Old habits,' he said. He inhaled deeply, examining the cigarette again, but this time with evident satisfaction. 'They're made in Bulgaria under licence, you know, with Virginia tobacco.' He took another drag.

'Now, to business,' he said. 'I won't insult you by asking you if you were followed. I'm sure you took all necessary measures.' He shrugged. 'But anyway, there's no point worrying. What do the Spanish say? *Que será, será?*'

Green found his insouciance disconcerting, but he thought he was getting a handle on the man. His age, the sharp cut of his suit, the near-flawlessness of his Russian, his confident demeanour, all indicated that this was someone of substance, someone of a genuinely senior military rank.

'Let us proceed', Souček continued. 'Mr Graham—'

‘Maurice, please.’

‘Morits. Of course.’

Souček took another deep drag on his Marlboro, the end glowing brightly red in the half-light of the restaurant, before balancing it on the ashtray. Green watched the smoke curl upwards towards the ceiling.

‘Here are my credentials,’ Souček said.

From his breast pocket, he took out a laminated card which he passed across to Green. It was a military photo-identity card, with Souček in uniform. Green glanced at him and then back at the card. The picture was of a man only a few years younger than the one in front of him. The card declared his rank as *podplukovník*. Green wished he had looked up Czech army ranks before he left for Prague. Colonel, maybe? The three pips on his shoulders in the photo supported that supposition, but major was also a possibility.

Souček must have sensed his uncertainty. ‘I am Lieutenant Colonel in the People’s Army of Czechoslovakia,’ he said.

Green passed the card back to him and he replaced it in his pocket. Souček retrieved his cigarette, took a drag and studied him appraisingly.

‘You are perhaps surprised?’ Souček said. ‘You did not expect you would be meeting someone of my rank?’

Green turned over a hand. ‘A little surprised, yes. To reach that rank you must have been a loyal officer, well-regarded by the high command.’

‘Correct.’

‘Even during the Prague Spring.’

Souček had finished his cigarette. He lit up a new one. ‘That is also correct. I was a captain then and as you see my Russian is good. I acted as temporary liaison officer with the Warsaw Pact forces during Operation Danube, which re-established order and peace. I also helped keep the greater part of our own army on the right side.’

‘You had no sympathy for Dubček and his supporters?’

Souček snorted. ‘For Dubček? No. He was a charlatan and self-promoter.’ He noticed Green’s reaction. ‘Not the common view in the West, I know, but it is mine.’ He drank some more coffee. ‘But I did have some sympathy for the reforms. How were they described? “Communism with a human face”? But they went too far. The role of the Czech

Communist Party would have been diminished and our country moved in the direction of capitalism. Comrade Brezhnev warned that the whole socialist project was under threat.'

'Really? That's what you believed?'

'I did. Morits, you must realise that Czechoslovakia is not some outlier in the socialist world, like ... erm ... like, Albania or Yugoslavia. Its position in central Europe makes it of the utmost strategic importance.'

'And in your mind, that justified the crackdown that followed?'

'At the time, yes.'

'And your service was recognised.'

'It was and if I may say so, continues to be well-regarded. But, Morits, there's one other thing you must bear in mind. I was ten years old when the Nazis marched into our country. I saw unspeakable atrocities as a young boy. I saw ... Well, I saw many things. My father was a member of an underground resistance group. He disappeared in nineteen-forty and I never saw him again. After the war, I discovered he'd been murdered in the prison camp at Terezín.'

'I'm very sorry. But that was a long time ago. By sixty-eight more than two decades had passed.'

'It didn't seem like that to me.' He shook his head. 'You're too young. The War's only something to read about in the history books for you. Whereas ...' He stopped abruptly, and once again looked at Green appraisingly. 'Although, perhaps not. Perhaps you are Jewish?'

'Well, yes. My family is, anyway. Is that a problem for you?'

'No. Not at all. In fact, my wife's father was Jewish. The Nazis killed him too. Auschwitz. What I meant was that perhaps you have a more instinctive understanding of the legacy of the War than other people of your age. The Russians were our liberators. We owed them a debt of gratitude.'

'Yet, here we are. Has that debt now been paid?'

Souček did not respond, but stood up and walked around a little, stopping to look at some of the photographs on the wall. He pointed at one.

'That's the old city hall in Ostrava,' he said. 'It's a museum now.'

He turned back to the table and sat down, lighting up another cigarette.



‘You’ve never been there, Morits? No, why would you? I was born there. It’s an interesting test case. At first, after the War, it did okay. There was coal and steel and plenty of work. The population shot up. New housing projects were built, initially in – what do you call it? – yes, in the Socialist Realist style.’

Green knew what that meant: grand-looking buildings with an ornate flourish that concealed tiny, uncomfortable apartments. He said, ‘But the industrial boom couldn’t last?’

‘No. Meanwhile, the city centre has been hollowed out to make more room for coal-mining. Which will run out in a few years.’

‘I see. And that’s why ...’

‘Not on its own. It’s one piece of the jigsaw. And those pieces have piled up, one after another.’ Souček drew on his cigarette, seemingly lost in thought.

‘Would one of those pieces be the invasion of Afghanistan?’ Green asked.

‘Actually, no. You have to see it from our side. Afghanistan could not be allowed to fall into the USA’s camp and potentially become a site for missile bases, so close to the USSR.’

‘I take that point. But even so—’

‘Morits, it was like Vietnam: Kabul asked for Soviet assistance, just like Saigon asked for the same from the USA.’

‘That didn’t go so well, all things considered.’

Souček laughed, a somewhat raspy laugh, but a laugh nonetheless.

‘No, not so well. Do you know what Brezhnev said about Afghanistan?’

Green shook his head.

‘He promised it would all be over, and I quote, “in three or four weeks”.’

‘Then he doesn’t know his history. The British learned long ago that Afghanistan was a bottomless pit that it took forever to clamber out of.’ Green shifted a little in his seat. ‘If not Afghanistan, Pavel, then what? What are the other pieces of the jigsaw?’

Souček nodded. ‘First,’ he said, ‘there was Operation Pegasus. You knew of this in the West?’

It was just before Green’s time, but one of the things they were lectured on during his training was Pegasus. It was the Soviet’s project to construct underground bunkers for their officers to use to command Warsaw Pact forces in wartime. They were built in Poland, Bulgaria and Russia.

‘Yes,’ Green said, ‘we knew about it. Not the details, but the general idea.’

‘I do know the details: the exact locations, the depth of the bunkers, the specifications of the walls, ceilings and shock absorbers. Everything.’

‘But that information must have been a closely guarded secret. How—?’

Souček gave a wry smile. ‘I understand your scepticism. But you see, I have been the Czech army liaison officer to the Soviet High Command for several years.’

Green had to stop himself from whistling. He was an even bigger fish than he’d thought.

‘And you see, Morits,’ Souček went on, ‘there was another, more frightening aspect to the operation. Senior Warsaw Pact officers were treated to a speech by General Valentin Varennikov. He told us that we didn’t actually need a first-strike nuclear option.’

‘Good to hear, I suppose. Why not?’

‘Because the Soviet High Command believed that the Warsaw Pact had superiority on land, in the air and on the sea—’

‘That can’t have been true—’

‘Doesn’t matter if it was true or not. The fact is that they believed it. Varennikov said that West Germany would be overrun in a matter of days and the main NATO forces defeated in less than a fortnight.’

‘But we’ve known for years – ever since the Wall went up – that the Soviets had designed plans for a pre-emptive strike on the West. Everyone referred to it as “Day X”.’

‘Of course, but in this case, the plans were updated with a level of detail to the nth degree. Details of not just how each Warsaw Pact country’s forces would be deployed, but the role of each individual regiment. Even the timings for how long it would take each unit to move into forward positions, the countdown time for the launch of R-300 missiles, and so on.’

‘And you have that information? In detail?’

‘Yes.’ From the chair next to him, Souček picked up a blue cardboard folder. From it he took out half-a-dozen A4-size sheets of paper and laid them on the table, turning them towards Green. They were very high resolution photostats.

‘These are excellent quality,’ Green said, looking up at him.

Souček looked pleased. ‘Yes, I took them myself and developed them in my own dark-room. I’ve been a photography nut for many years. This is well-known. I was given a top-of-the-range Zorka camera by General Kulikov.’

Green turned back to the papers on the table. He saw straightaway they were copies of the plans Souček had been talking about. They were indeed incredibly detailed.

‘That is not the complete set. I thought a sample would be enough—’

‘No, that’s fine.’ Green took out a camera and took shots of all the material. Inevitably, Souček, the photography buff, was fascinated by the sub-miniature camera.

‘May I?’ he asked, and Green handed it over. Souček inspected the camera with something approaching reverence.

‘Of course,’ he said, ‘I have heard about these, but I have never seen one.’

‘Surely the KGB have them? Even the StB.’

‘Of course. But we humble soldiers are not so fortunate.’

Green asked if Souček minded if he read through the documents and was told to go ahead. Souček sat smoking, pushing pieces around the chess board, and finishing his coffee.

‘It didn’t happen, though, did it?’ Green said, when he’d finished. ‘No T-72 tanks rumbled across the border into West Germany, did they?’

‘No, they didn’t.’ Souček took a long drag on his cigarette and blew smoke out of the corner of his mouth. ‘Wiser heads – Andropov, Suslov, my old friend Kulikov – prevailed. They understood there was a real possibility that the West would respond with nuclear weapons. Besides, the election of Carter as US president calmed things down. No-one believed that he would launch an attack on the Warsaw Pact.’

‘But that was never really on the cards, anyway, was it?’

‘Objectively, perhaps not, but there has always been plenty of paranoia to go round on both sides.’

Green remembered that Matt Waddington had said much the same thing.

‘True enough,’ he said. ‘And all this was going on while détente was supposed to be the order of the day?’

‘I know. Absurd, isn’t it?’ Souček shook his head. ‘I had high hopes from détente. Perhaps, I’m naïve, but I thought it meant a new beginning. And then there were the Helsinki Accords. They promised security for the Warsaw Pact countries and the prospect of progress towards self-determination. I even thought there would be protection of human rights.’

‘If you were being naïve, you weren’t the only one.’

‘Perhaps. But anyway, then along came Charter 77 and the boot came down again. So much for human rights, eh?’ Souček sat silently smoking for a moment. ‘Do you like jazz, Morits?’

‘Er, yes, up to a point,’ Green said, surprised by the sudden change of direction. ‘I’m more a rock man, myself, but I can listen to Miles Davis or Charlie Parker.’

‘I love jazz. I have maybe five hundred records. All vinyl, you understand. No cassette tapes. They aren’t ... authentic, somehow. Anyway, now Czech jazz musicians have been condemned by the government for spreading “unacceptable views”.’ He shook his head. ‘Unacceptable views.’

Once again, Souček sat quietly smoking. Green stopped himself from filling the silence.

Souček went on, ‘The government also branded the signatories to the document as “traitors and renegades”. Traitors, for asking the government to honour its commitments!

‘My son, Zdeněk, has a girlfriend, Marta Hájek. She’s a wonderful girl. Maybe they will marry when they finish their studies. Her father, Martin, signed the Charter. He was arrested and put in jail for eight months. Initially, Marta was going to be denied a place at university, but Martin recanted. I don’t blame him.’

So, there was a personal element, too. Was it all enough? Enough pieces of the jigsaw in place to explain the disillusion of a previously loyal senior army officer who had taken an active part in crushing the Prague Spring only a dozen or so years previously? Once again, Souček seemed to read Green’s mind.

‘There was also an incident,’ he said, ‘maybe not so important in itself, that unsettled me. Rattled me badly in fact.’

‘What was that?’

‘A few months ago, I attended a missile-launching exercise in Kazakhstan. There, I saw that the hardware, the matériel, was state of the art. But the conditions the soldiers were living in were unspeakably squalid. Not the officers, of course. We were very well looked after.’

‘That can’t have been the first time you’d experienced the contradictions of the system.’

‘No, of course not. But you tell yourself that there will be progress, that things will continue to improve. That things are *bound* to improve.’

‘And then they don’t.’

‘No. And now there’s *Solidarność*. It is what I believe you call the straw that broke the back of a camel. It’s common knowledge that the Soviets had put plans in place for taking military action against Poland, isn’t it?’

Green nodded his head. ‘Yeah, sure. We had intel about troop movements, supposed military exercises and what have you.’ He hesitated for a moment. ‘I’m sure *you* know the CIA were on top of it. Hell, I believe Carter was getting warning alerts on a weekly basis.’

‘Of course, but do you know how close they were to actually doing it?’ He held up his right hand, his thumb and forefinger not quite touching.

‘Are you sure? Even though there were – still are – thousands of Soviet troops stuck up to their necks in the Hindu Kush, or some such godforsaken place. And with no obvious exit strategy.’

Souček took another drag from his cigarette. ‘You’re right. But it’s only the 40<sup>th</sup> Army from Turkmenistan. Do you know how many men there are under arms in the Soviet Union?’

Green wagged his left hand. ‘Two million? Two and a half?’

‘Nearer to three.’

‘Even so. There would have been huge repercussions. What did Carter say? There would be “negative consequences” to US-Soviet relations?’

‘Yes, yes. And that worked. For a time. But there are still hawks in the room, Soviet generals who don’t believe the Americans will actually commit troops to save Poland. Or say they don’t, anyway. And they feel caught between a rock and a hard place. In their eyes the Polish authorities have failed to deal with what they call the counterrevolutionaries.’

‘And military action is the only solution?’

‘Not the only one. The alternative is a harsh internal crackdown followed by the imposition of martial law.’

‘Would Jaruzelski accept that?’

‘Jaruzelski drew up his own plan for martial law, called “Operation Spring”. In secret. Only the top military leaders in Poland knew about it.’

‘So, what happened.’

‘The Soviets rejected it. They wanted greater involvement of military forces.’

Souček finished his cigarette and reached for the packet, but put it down again, unopened. He had been sitting back in his chair, but now leaned across the table. 'You must understand what this means, Morits. Unless the West intervenes immediately, soon, maybe in a week's time, fifteen Soviet divisions will cross the Polish frontier supported by East German and Czech troops. The pretext will be joint exercises with the Polish army, known as "Soyuz 81".'

Green took a moment to process this. "'Intervenes", how? Militarily?'

'If necessary, yes. I do not believe that a threat of "negative consequences" will be enough, this time.'

'But even if Reagan threatens military action, will that threat be believed?'

'Yes. They think he's a maverick. Worse, a war-monger.'

'They may be right.'

This time Souček did take a cigarette from the pack and light it. After drawing on it, he gestured with it toward Green. 'You must take this information back to London. It must be communicated to Washington.'

Green blew out his cheeks. 'Okay Pavel. I'm going to go straight back to London and pass this on up the chain.'

'Good. Very good. Thank you Morits.'

'There is one thing, though ...' Green said.

'Yes? What is it?'

'To be honest, Pavel, I'm wondering why you have brought this to us. It's gold dust. Why not give it to the Americans?'

'But you were told, weren't you? They told you I knew about a traitor, didn't they? A "mole" quite high up in the secret service?' He used the English word. 'Codename COS-SACK'.

So, it seemed Oleg had either misheard, or made a minor translation mistake. A Cossack was after all a kind of Tatar. 'Yes,' Green said, 'but I don't ...'

'Ah! Maybe I did not make it clear. No, maybe not. It's the CIA, Morits. The traitor COS-SACK is in the CIA.'

## Chapter Six

*London, February 1982*

Standing outside the Travellers Club in Pall Mall, Green adjusted the tie Matthew Waddington had insisted he wear. He'd never been to a gentlemen's club before, regarding them as out-of-date bastions of privilege and misogyny. What's more, he doubted if he could ever have become a member. Probably, no one would come right out and say 'No Jews allowed', but he was sure he'd be blackballed nonetheless. He was there with his boss to meet 'C': Sir Arthur Temple Franks, the Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service. Green had flown back to London the same day after meeting Pavel Souček in Prague. As soon as he'd arrived at Ruzyně Airport and booked his ticket home, he'd phoned Waddington and told him that negotiations had been very successful but that he needed to see him urgently to finalise the details. He also suggested that they might need an urgent meeting with the 'Managing Director'. The flight was far from full and having managed to negotiate a seat with no-one next to him, Green settled down to transcribe, from memory, the documents Souček had shown him, detailing the plans for Soviet military intervention in Poland. Green didn't have a photographic memory, not technically, anyway. He couldn't visualise a page he'd seen just as if it were in front of him, but he could recall the contents with a very high degree of accuracy. Green first made a Russian transcription, but had time, too, to rough out a translation into English.

It was just before eight o'clock in the evening by the time he got to Century House. George Bainbridge had gone off duty, to be replaced by a younger man whom he'd never met before, but who announced himself as Dennis McVitie, 'Like the biscuits, sir'. His Irish accent suggested Derry rather than Dublin. Although he looked to be physically fit, Green thought he detected a slight tic in his left eye. Green passed over the film cartridge he'd used in Prague and asked McVitie to make sure the tech boys put a rush on developing the pictures, invoking Captain Waddington's name if there were any pushback. Waddington told him later that, eighteen months previously, McVitie had been in a bar in Belfast, undercover, when the UVF exploded a bomb. Physically he had recovered, but was suffering from what everyone was now calling PTSD. Apparently, SIS was doing Special Branch a favour in finding him a job.

After Waddington had received Green's report, he had immediately picked up the phone and after some to-ing and fro-ing tracked the Chief down to his club. This was no surprise: not only was he a member, but it was a regular haunt of the most senior intelligence officers. They were there in a little under an hour to be met by a steward, who told them Sir Arthur was waiting for them in the Wellington Room. Looking round, Green was glad Waddington had insisted on formal dress. Even the vestibule reeked of tradition and exclusivity, with a wood-panelled porters' lodge and antique-looking leather furniture. The polished oak floor was partially covered by a heavily-brocaded rug. They were shown up a staircase whose walls were adorned with paintings of past members: British and foreign royals, prime ministers, including Wellington himself, ambassadors and dignitaries of all kinds. The Wellington Room proved to be a relatively small private room, shelved with glass-fronted bookcases on all sides, stretching up to the high ceiling. There were four overstuffed armchairs placed round a low coffee table in front of a smouldering fire. C rose from his chair.

'Thank you, sergeant,' he said, to the steward who'd shown them up. The man bowed and left the room, closing the door behind him. 'Edwards was with me in the Western Desert in '41, you know, then later in Cyprus. Trust him with my life. In fact, I've had to, more than once.'

He shook hands with Waddington, and then with Green, whom Waddington had introduced.

'Ah, yes,' he said, 'Michael Green. I've heard good things about you. Very good, in fact.'

Green had no way of knowing whether this was true or not. He took the measure of the great man, just as he was obviously doing with Green. They were about the same height, but C was carrying rather more weight. He was wearing glasses with very thin rims, which helped make him look a little younger than his age, of just over sixty. His face was remarkably unlined for someone in his position and he still retained dark brown streaks in his otherwise grey, swept-back hair. He wore a charcoal suit and a striped tie which Green assumed was the emblem of his old school, though he'd never understood why important and successful men – it applied only to men, of course – felt the need to alert the world, not to their achievements and successes, but to the institution that had



witnessed their childhood escapades. Certainly, Green had never felt the need to wear the red and blue colours of Barking Abbey Grammar School after he'd left.

'Thank you, Sir Arthur, Green said, 'it's very kind—'

'Dickie, my boy, call me Dickie.'

He gestured for them to sit in the armchairs and busied himself with a tray left on the table, no doubt by the estimable Edwards. He poured generous measures into three balloon glasses from a bottle of Rémy Martin XO and handed round a box of cigars, which both Green and Waddington declined. While C engaged in the rigmarole of lighting up, Green took a sip of his cognac. It was superb. C settled back in his chair.

'Very well,' he said, 'tell me about the PELICAN.'

'Actually, Sir – I mean, Dickie – I've called him after a Czech chess player, whose name is spelled "PELIKÁN", with the stress on the last syllable.'

'Is that so?' said C. 'Ah, I see. Still, "PELICAN" has its own ring to it, don't you think? Let's stick to that.'

'Er, yes, of course. PELICAN it is.'

Green rehearsed his meeting in Prague, leaving out nothing but Souček's name, at C's insistence. He summarised some parts and recounted the rest as near to verbatim as he could manage. His account wasn't word-perfect – Green's aural memory was not as strong as his visual one, though taking an interpreting module as part of an MA in Russian had helped. When he'd finished, C sat in silence, for a moment or two, alternately sipping his cognac and drawing on his cigar.

'Thank you, Michael,' he said. 'Admirably clear and remarkably comprehensive. And you say there are some supporting documents?'

Green passed over his English translation of the plans to him, explaining their provenance and that the original photographs were being developed at Century House.

Waddington said, 'Michael has an eidetic memory.'

C looked at Green with renewed interest. 'Handy,' he said.

Green shrugged. 'Matt exaggerates.' C raised an eyebrow. 'It's not quite as good as that. But, yes, I'm very lucky.'

C nodded, then read the papers once, quickly, before going through them again, more slowly. When he'd finished, he pushed them aside and sat back in his armchair, drawing once more on his cigar.

‘Very well,’ he said. ‘Let us leave aside for the time being the deeply disturbing revelation of the existence of a mole. On the face of it, PELICAN has the potential to be an extraordinarily valuable asset. You are certain, Michael, that he is not a Soviet plant?’

‘Certain? No. Never that. We’ve been burned before and I dare say we will be again. But, if he is a plant, he’s the best actor since De Niro. I forgot to say, by the way, he insisted he didn’t want any money. Not a single *haléř*.’

‘Matthew?’ said C.

Waddington grunted. ‘That might mean owt or nowt, as my old man would say. If he is a plant, that would be a smart move on his part, wouldn’t it? But no, everything Michael has said convinces me he’s kosher. And the plans just seal the deal.’

‘Perhaps,’ said C. ‘Plans can be fabricated, can they not?’

‘Yes, but—’

‘And how do we explain PELICAN’s damascene conversion from loyal communist military high-flier to repentant friend of the decadent West?’

‘I’m not sure I’d put it quite that way,’ Green said. ‘Look, he’s definitely struggling to come to terms with his decision to seek us out, but as he put it, too many pieces of the jigsaw have fallen into place.’

‘Enough for him to turn traitor?’

‘He wouldn’t see it that way. The reverse, in fact. He’s a patriot. And event after event has made him see that Czechoslovakia will never be able to make its own way in the world as part the Warsaw Pact.’

C stroked his chin. ‘I see. Very well.’

He leaned forward and poured another measure of Rémy Martin into each of their glasses. Green thought about the exchange they’d just had. C seemed to have accepted his argument rather easily.

‘Could it be,’ Green said, ‘that the plans PELICAN has provided square with images we have from the NSA’s spy satellites of troop movements at the border?’

C’s lips twitched for a fraction of a second and he held aloft his glass as if considering the qualities of the clear amber liquid inside. ‘Well, Michael, the reports I have heard about you do not seem to be exaggerated.’ He turned over a hand. ‘The CIA shares that intel with us when it feels like it, out of the goodness of its heart. And apparently there’s been some bad weather that hasn’t helped.’

'But ...?'

'But yes, I have spoken several times to Bill Casey, the new director, and he has confirmed there is evidence of military activity in Ukraine and Czechoslovakia. Possibly East Germany too.'

'And does anyone believe it's just "Soyuz 81", the military exercise mentioned by PELICAN?' Green asked.

'No, Michael, they do not.'

'Yet,' said Waddington, 'the Americans don't seem to have taken any action.'

'No, they haven't. Or, at least, not yet. As I'm sure you know, there are hawks and doves in Reagan's administration, as in any.'

'More hawks than in Carter's, I'd warrant,' said Waddington.

'To be sure. General Haig to name but one. But Casey tells me they're minded to bide their time, hoping that it's nothing more than sabre-rattling.'

'But PELICAN's intel suggests that's likely to turn out to be a forlorn hope.' Waddington said.

'And very soon,' Green added.

'Just so. However, that intel might not quite be a smoking gun—'

'But—'

'—but it's damn close.' C smiled. 'We'll be pushing on an open door, believe me. This will be just what Casey needs to persuade the President that something has to be done. Something significant. And right now.'

C looked at his watch and the expression on his face suggested he was involved in some complicated mental arithmetic. 'I expect Casey will still be in his office,' he said, 'but either way, I will make sure I speak to him tonight.'

'So, what will you tell him about the source of the intel?' Waddington asked.

C appeared to consider this question, carefully. 'Let's come back to that.'

Briefly, they sat quietly, C occupied with his cigar, Waddington and Green fiddling with their drinks.

'Tell me,' C asked, 'how many people know PELICAN's true identity?'

Waddington glanced at Green and said, 'As far as we know, just the two of us.'

C drew on his cigar. 'Good, good. Let's keep it that way. What about the fact that he exists at all? I mean, who knows we potentially have an agent in play?'

‘Again,’ said Waddington, ‘just the two of us and now you.’

‘What about the contacts he made in the embassy – in Vienna, was it not? – and the people who made the arrangements for Michael to meet him?’

‘You’re right, Dickie,’ said Waddington. ‘A handful of people know we’ve had the equivalent of a walk-in. But we can make it appear it was a dead-end, that he was a time-waster.’

‘Or a plant,’ Green suggested.

C nodded. ‘Even better.’

‘But if we are going to run him,’ said Waddington ‘and his product turns out to be as good as we expect—’

‘—how are we going to protect PELICAN’s identity and disguise his existence?’ finished C.

‘Yes,’ said Waddington. ‘Exactly.’

‘How well does he speak Russian?’ asked C.

‘Fluently,’ Green said.

‘Very well, then. I suggest we split our man in half.’

‘Sir?’ said Waddington.

‘We have other assets in play,’ said C. ‘Let’s see if we can’t attribute PELICAN’s material to two existing sources. One in Moscow, one in Prague. That should be feasible, don’t you think?’

‘Absolutely,’ said Waddington.

‘Excellent,’ said C, ‘but that means we’re going to have to expand our little cabal. As head of the Soviet desk, Marcus de Jong will have to know, as will Harry Oxenford at Satellites. Not the details, but we should tell them separately that they each have a new source we’re keeping under wraps. Leave that to me.’

‘What will you tell the Director about the alleged mole in his organisation?’ asked Waddington.

C turned towards me. ‘Michael, you told me that PELICAN doesn’t know the name of the mole, but you didn’t tell me how he knows there is one.’

‘Didn’t I? I’m sorry, Dickie. It’s simple enough. Remember, he’s a trusted senior officer in the Warsaw Pact High Command. As such, he’s been in the room when the Soviets

have been discussing KGB reports from a source called COSSACK. They don't know the agent's name, just that he's CIA.'

C leaned back in his chair and made a noise, somewhere between a sigh and a snort. 'Just as I feared. Casey will have to know. We cannot keep this to ourselves. No, it won't be easy ...' He sat pensively for a moment, then looked up at them and smiled. 'Sorry, gentlemen. Talking to myself. Old habit.'

'Are we to gather this is not news to you?' said Waddington.

'No. PELICAN's disclosure is actually less a revelation than a confirmation. Rumours about a mole have been percolating for some while, now. After all, Michael, your own asset made reference to those rumours before he got burned, did he not?'

'He did.'

'Naturally, his disappearance and subsequent execution rang alarm bells, but not for the first time. There have been other incidents that have sent up a signal, incidents of which you would not have been aware.'

'Involving our agents?' Green asked.

'Not primarily, no. Several months ago, the CIA lost an asset in Rome. Then, there were two in Moscow almost immediately and several more since. Meanwhile, one of our own assets escaped capture there only by the skin of his teeth. Added to that, overnight we learned that a CIA officer had been caught red-handed at a drop site. And that follows a period when agents have reported increased surveillance activity.'

'And "COSSACK"?' Green asked. 'That codename has come up before?'

'It has. Again, no more than a rumour, until now. A handler had heard it from his agent who'd had it from a contact ... You know the form. Not something that we had wanted to broadcast, at this stage.'

'But now?' asked Waddington.

C made that sighing-grunting noise again. 'Now, we have something far more concrete.'

'Concrete enough, in fact, to tell Director Casey about PELICAN?' Green asked.

'I fear so. Which means I'm going to have to persuade him that in the immediate future, at least, we will not be able to share PELICAN's product with our allies for fear of exposing the source.'

Waddington and Green looked at each other. 'We don't envy you that conversation,' Waddington said.

'Thank you. Let's get on. As well as Casey, I will also need to speak to the Permanent Secretary. Meanwhile we need an account, in Russian, of your conversation with PELICAN. Can you type, Michael? Is that another of your accomplishments?'

'Er, yes. It is.'

'Good. Go back to Century House, type up your report, get it encrypted and have the duty officer fax it across to Langley, together with the plans, for the Director's eyes only. I'll make sure they have been developed. Can you do that, Michael.'

'Of course, sir. Uh! Dickie.'

C smiled. 'What arrangements are in place for you to run PELICAN?'

'Well,' said Waddington, 'we weren't sure—'

'For the time being,' insisted C, 'you will run him, Michael. Later when things have settled down, we will have to establish other contact procedures, but for now let's keep it as simple as possible. When's the next meeting?'

'As it happens,' Green said, 'the Soviets are so pleased with him, that he's been given a few days off next month.'

'Well-deserved, no doubt. Where's he going?'

'He's a jazz fan and there's a mini-festival in Tampere.' Green could see that C was looking a little quizzical. 'A hundred and thirty miles or so from Helsinki. I believe Jan Garbarek is top of the bill.'

'Ah, yes,' said C. 'The saxophonist.'

Waddington and Green exchanged glances. C's face was impassive. He finished the last of his brandy and stood up. He said, 'I'd better go and track down Bill Casey and fill him in. Well done to you both. I'll bid you good night. Sergeant Edwards will see you out.'

Waddington and Green stood up and turned to leave.

'One more thing,' said C. 'From now on I want you to be extra careful in everything you do, Michael. Moscow Rules to the power of ten.'

## Chapter Seven

*Tampere, Finland, March 1982*

These words of warning were still ringing in Green's ears weeks later as he set off on the two-hour train ride to Tampere to meet up with PELICAN. Soviet troops had not crossed the border into Poland. Walt Koslowski had told him that C's warning to Bill Casey had given the CIA Director the final piece of ammunition he needed to convince Reagan and his inner cabinet to take urgent action. The US President had told Brezhnev over the hot-line that if a single Soviet tank rolled into Warsaw there would be hell to pay.

'Did Reagan actually threaten military action?' Green asked.

'I imagine he told him he'd kick his ass all round Dzerzhinsky Square,' said Koslowski. 'But I wasn't in the room, you know?'

Green grunted at this. His view was that nothing happened in the world of US espionage that Walt Koslowski didn't know about, chapter and verse.

'Anyway, Mikey,' Koslowski asked, 'where'd Sir Dickie get such million-dollar intel, in the first place?'

'Look, Walt,' Green spluttered. 'I can't, er—'

Koslowski laughed. 'Don't sweat it, Mikey. I'm just fucking with you.'

This exchange, for once, hadn't taken place in the stifling confines of the American Embassy safe room. Instead, they were lounging on a bench on what passed in Helsinki for a balmy early spring afternoon in Kaisaniemi Park. They'd arrived early, prior to a softball game arranged by staff at the embassy, with the opposition drawn from the various other embassies in Helsinki. Green knew nothing about softball. He'd been picked partly, he supposed, because he was a relatively young man and partly because he had once told Koslowski that he used to play cricket at school. 'Same thing,' the CIA man said. 'You hit a goddam ball with a goddam bat, don't you?' Koslowski had been designated coach to the USA team and as if to demonstrate the seriousness of the whole operation, Julius de Jonghe filled that post for the other side.

The Americans had fired up a barbecue, and brought along giant iceboxes full of beer. To Green's mild surprise, Mitch Masterton was on the 'home' team, but he insisted he'd played little league at school in Iowa. Green noticed that he was liberally helping himself to Budweisers, as well as topping himself up from a hipflask. This was no surprise.

Masterton had become a member at the chess club, where he did more drinking at the bar than playing, often accompanied by Rosalita Campos. When he did exert himself to get behind a board, drunk or sober, he would be more than a match for most opponents, especially Green, who never once beat him. Masterton's drinking was earning him quite a reputation, not just at the club, but at the many functions embassy staff attended. This must have come to the attention of his superiors in the CIA, but when Green raised it with Koslowski, he simply shrugged it off as nothing out of the ordinary. Drinking was just part of a CIA officer's job, both his 'day job', mixing with other diplomats and officials in social settings, and his clandestine role, where he was expected to cultivate sources. In this regard, good ol' Mitch was just 'a regular guy'.

The game drifted along merrily, with the Americans running out comfortable winners, not that anyone was keeping count. Apart from Koslowski, of course. Afterwards, more drinking ensued, and burgers and hot dogs were devoured. There was convivial conversation, laughter at more-or-less risqué jokes and even some singing of university songs, led by Masterton. Eventually, everyone drifted away, leaving Green sitting on a bench having a last drink with de Jonghe, watching the sun dipping behind the birch trees. They sat in companionable silence, the diplomat lighting up a panatella and trying with varying success to blow smoke rings into the darkening sky. When they had finished their beers, de Jonghe stood and took the bottles over to a nearby rubbish bin. As he turned back, Green stood up to join him.

'Hey!' said de Jonghe. 'Don't forget your bag.'

Green swivelled round and sure enough there was a sports bag tucked under the bench.

'It's not mine,' Green said, bending down and dragging it out. He hefted it to check if there was anything inside. There obviously was. 'Should I open it?'

'No, *mon ami*, just ask it to tell you whose it is.'

'Ha-ha. Okay, there's a towel, a sweatshirt, a water-bottle ...'

'Try the side pocket, *imbécile*.'

'Oh! Right.' Green unzipped it and took out the contents. 'Shit!'

He laid out on the bench a CIA badge, a notepad with a ballpoint attached, and a wallet. Inside the wallet were a few credit cards, some in Mitch Masterton's name, a wad of



US dollars and Finnish *markkaa*, and a number of identity documents, in different names including Masterton's.

'*Mon Dieu!*' said de Jonghe, 'At least he didn't leave his gun.'

Later, Masterton was casually grateful to be reunited with his belongings, but not unduly perturbed. 'Thanks man. Gee, I guess I must have had one too many in the park. Still, no harm no foul, eh, Michael?'

\*

Green had never been to Tampere before and it wasn't what he expected. In the past, Finnish friends had kidded him that he needed to visit the 'Manchester of the North', so-called because of its industrial heritage. There, in his view, the similarity ended. For a start, though it was noticeably colder than it had been in Helsinki, it was a bright Saturday, with a crispness to the air and a limpidness to the light that did not call to mind Beswick or Ardwick. Sure, a few factory chimneys dotted the skyline, but as, with time on his hands, he wandered the streets of the city, he was struck by how attractive it was, with its lakes and green spaces. Nor did the murmur of the clean water of the Tammmerkoski Rapids flowing beneath the Hämeensilta Bridge on Tampere's main street suffer in comparison to Manchester's dingy River Irwell.

Green was as certain as he could be that neither he nor PELICAN would be under surveillance, but he was conscious not only of C's parting advice, but also the oft-repeated words of caution of one of his countersurveillance instructors, who had a definite way with words: 'Complacency is the handmaiden of getting a nine-millimetre slug in the back of your fucking neck.' There was no need for the complicated manoeuvres Green had undertaken in Prague, just some sensible precautions. So, he paid careful attention to his surroundings, ducked down side streets, retraced his steps and so on. At the end of Hämeenkatu he nipped into a glass fronted café-bar, which provided him with not just a beer and a ham sandwich, but also a good vantage point to watch the world go by. The city was busy with shoppers and, Green presumed, visitors to the jazz festival, which had begun the night before. No alarm bells rang in his head.

Pavel Souček had phoned Green the previous evening to arrange the meeting in Näsi Park, to the north of the city. It was an attractive place in which to walk, with the sun streaming through the trees. The park was busy enough, especially around the statues and monuments, at the quayside, and in the café-bar. The crowds thinned out at the

north-east corner, but it took Green a little while to find Souček. He was sitting on a bench tucked away in a little clearing in the trees, with a view over Lake Näsijärvi. He was dressed casually in leather blouson, polo-neck jumper and jeans.

‘Ah, Morits,’ Souček said, standing up and offering Green his hand, ‘right on time. It is good to see you. How are you?’

‘Hello, Pavel. I am well. It is very good to see you too.’ Green clapped him on the shoulder. ‘How are things with you?’

He smiled, ruefully. ‘Well, there has been no invasion of Poland, which is good. But I fear it cannot be too long before martial law is imposed.’

‘You’re probably right. But you, yourself. How are *you* doing?’

‘So, I cannot complain. I enjoy my little holiday here in Finland. I continue to be well-regarded in the high command. And my family and I will soon be moving from our apartment to a new house in Holešovice.’

‘That’s good news, isn’t it?’

‘Oh, yes. Certainly. My wife is very happy.’ He lit a cigarette. ‘But we should get down to business, should we not?’

‘Sure. We should.’ Green rummaged in his shoulder bag and took out a number of items. ‘This,’ he said, ‘is a Minox TLX camera.’ He passed it to Souček, who weighed it in his hand. It was the length of a credit card, but half the width and no thicker than a matchbox.

‘Ah,’ said Souček, ‘it is the same kind of camera you yourself used in the restaurant, is it not?’

‘It is.’

‘What film does it take?’

‘Nine point two millimetres. It rolls into a two-chamber cartridge.’

‘How many exposures?’

‘Maximum thirty-six. I know you have your own camera and developing facilities, but it might come in useful when you have access to documents but can’t take them away with you.’

‘Of course.’ Souček practised ejecting the cartridge and adjusting the controls, then slipped the camera into his inside pocket. They discussed possible methods for him to hand over material, agreeing that they would keep face-to-face meetings to a minimum.

Every six weeks or so, unless there was an emergency. They went through the procedures relating to dead drops, car exchanges and brush passes. Initially, at least, dead drops seemed the best option. That way, any one of the officers from the embassy in Prague could collect the material without having to meet Souček. Thus, the identity of PELICAN could continue to be concealed. Green produced a map of Prague and they worked out the details: every Thursday, if Souček had something to deliver, he would leave a chalk mark on a post-box in a corner of a car park next to the Charlotty Garrigue Masarykové Park. The park, less impressive than its name suggested, according to Souček, was a stone's throw from his office in the Ministry of Defence on Tychonova. He often took the odd walk there, sometimes sitting on a bench to eat a lunchtime sandwich. It was also not much more than a quarter of a mile from the British Embassy on Thunovská. The chalk mark would be a signal that there would be something to be collected at the dead-drop site. After some discussion, they agreed that the site should be under a footbridge in the south-east corner of Stromovka Park, which would be closer to Souček's new home. Once an officer from the embassy had cleared the site, he or she would return to the post box and rub out the chalk mark. Green passed over a box of yellow chalk, a magnetic clam dead-drop container, some one-time pads and a copy of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* to be used as a codebook, which Souček thought was a particularly suitable choice. They agreed Green would come to Prague in six weeks' time, to review how the arrangements were working out and, if necessary, designate some more dead-drop sites.

'One last matter, Pavel,' Green said. 'Is there anything more you can tell me about the mole in the CIA – source COSSACK as I believe he's known?'

'No, nothing. I am sorry, but his identity is being kept completely secret.'

## Chapter Eight

*Helsinki, April 1982*

Following his return to Helsinki from Tampere, Green's time was divided between handling PELICAN and attending to his day-to-day work. This caused some friction with the head of station, Philip Norrington, who had been given instructions that while Green was still generally to work under his supervision, there would be times when he would be on special assignment, reporting directly to Matt Waddington. Norrington was not told what that special assignment entailed, and had to accept that Green would be allowed to determine when he needed to devote his attention to it. Meanwhile, the search was on to find a replacement for Oleg. That was not proving easy, though the prospects seemed to have perked up with the arrival of a dozen or so new 'diplomats' taking up a variety of positions at the Soviet Embassy. The job was to try to determine which of them were KGB or GRU. The assumption was guilty until proven innocent. Norrington's team did what background checks they could, liaising with Moscow Station, and Green was sent off to talk to Walt Koslowski. He and Green often discussed the existence or otherwise of the mole in the CIA, codenamed COSSACK. From time to time, Koslowski told him about an agent captured by the Soviets, presumed tortured and executed.

'You know, Mikey, once upon a time I'd've shrugged this off as the cost of doing business. But now I'm not so sure. It's happening too damn often.'

Green also continued to see quite a bit of Mitch Masterton, one way or another. He was a regular at the chess club and it was now an open secret that he and his wife, Barbara, who had remained in the States, were getting divorced. He and Rosalita Campos had become inseparable, not that she seemed to have a beneficial effect on his drinking. For example, Green had heard that at a party at the American Embassy, he was so drunk he had to be taken home by operatives from the CIA Office of Security.

Eventually, Green having had no luck in recruiting any of the new arrivals at the Soviet Embassy, attention turned to a new target, Fyodor Shevchenko, foreign correspondent for *Pravda*. The tip came from *Daily Telegraph* journalist, Alexander McGregor, who had been at school with Norrington. Over the years, McGregor had become friendly with Shevchenko; they attended the same briefings and press conferences, and like many of the correspondents, frequented the drinking holes of Helsinki. They also shared a mutual

interest in ice hockey, and took to supporting local team HIFK at the Helsinki Ice Hall to the north of the city.

McGregor told Norrington that he and Shevchenko had had many booze-fuelled conversations about the state of the world. The Russian was deeply concerned that the leaders in Moscow were utterly paranoid. They were convinced, he said, that the Americans were committed to the destruction of the Soviet Union. Moreover, he'd also disclosed that he was in desperate financial trouble. Partly, he was able to blame his wife, who had developed a predilection for the latest fashions Helsinki had to offer, but he confessed that he too had been seduced by western luxuries, having bought a host of consumer goods, including a brand-new Volvo 262C Coupé and a top-of-the-range Bang and Olufsen stereo system. Shevchenko had even inquired whether McGregor could get him some work as a stringer for the *Telegraph*.

Instead, Norrington suggested that Green might dangle an offer of some steady cash in front of him, assuming he had something interesting to offer. So, the next Saturday night, Green hopped on a bus for the twenty-minute ride to the Ice Hall. It was a play-off match against local rivals Jokerit and the stadium was filling up to its eight-and-a-half-thousand capacity. There was a boisterous atmosphere, most of the fans wearing blue and white scarves and bobble hats, the colours of the home team. The temperature in Helsinki was in the low thirties, so Green was in full winter gear, particularly as he had been forewarned by McGregor that ice hockey stadia were always kept cold – which was obvious, if you thought about it. He bought a couple of beers – although he was sorely tempted by the hot chocolate – and a big bag of crisps, and took them to the seat indicated on the ticket McGregor had passed on.

Shevchenko was already there, sitting half a dozen rows back, at the halfway line. He too was well prepared against the elements, engulfed by a bulky overcoat and wearing fur-lined gloves, an astrakhan hat and an HIFK scarf. As far as Green could tell, he looked to be in his mid-thirties, probably a little under six-foot tall. His fair hair was long, protruding from the bottom of his hat and partly covering his scarf. His sideburns were also quite long, reaching the bottom of his ears, and he wore an apology for a moustache, hiding under a narrow, straight nose.

'Hi, Fedya,' Green said in Russian. 'Alex couldn't come tonight, so he lent me his ticket.'

He passed over a beer and offered Shevchenko some crisps from the open packet. At first, Shevchenko looked at the newcomer warily, but Green smiled and nodded, and he accepted the beer and took off a glove to scoop up a handful of crisps.

‘Who are you?’ he asked.

‘My name is Maurice Graham,’ Green said, putting down his beer and showing him a fake passport. ‘I work at the British Embassy.’

Green had expected Shevchenko to be more disconcerted by him appearing out of the blue, but after his initial reaction, Shevchenko acted as if everything was as normal. Perhaps it was his journalism training coming through. Perhaps it was some other kind of training. Shevchenko drank his beer and munched some crisps.

‘You are a fan of ice hockey?’ he asked.

‘This is my first game,’ Green said. ‘How long is half-time?’

‘Half-time? Ah, no. There are no halves.’

‘No halves? Do you mean they play the whole thing in one go?’

He shook his head. ‘No, Mr *Graham*—’

‘Maurice, please.’

‘Very well. No, *Maurice*. They don’t play the whole thing in one go. There are three periods of play, with intermissions after the first and second period.’

‘How long?’

‘Fifteen minutes.’

‘Okay.’

They watched the match. Green had seen bits and pieces on TV, but this was a whole other ball game. Or puck game. The pace was exhilarating and there was a thrilling brutality in the clashes between the players – or skaters as Shevchenko insisted – as they body-checked each other, often sending their opponents crashing into the side boards. On the other hand, it overran its schedule, the first twenty-minute period taking more than half an hour, what with infringements, time-outs, injuries and substitutions. Eventually, it came to an end with HIFK ahead 1-0. They made for the bar.

Green bought more beer and though there were fans wandering through the concourse, they managed to find a quiet corner. Shevchenko looked at the SIS officer appraisingly as he sipped from his bottle and Green took the opportunity to return the favour.

His blue-grey eyes were hooded by heavy lids, giving him, Green thought, an air of caution and secretiveness. But that might just have been a projection of his suspicions.

‘You are enjoying the match?’ Shevchenko asked.

‘I am,’ Green said. ‘More than I expected.’

‘But that is not your reason for being here.’

It wasn’t a question. ‘No, you’re right. I wanted to ask you something.’

Shevchenko remained impassive, taking occasional swigs of beer. Green was unsure of the best approach.

‘Er, I was wondering—’

‘Two thousand.’

‘Sorry?’

‘Two thousand. A month.’

‘Roubles?’

Shevchenko shook his head. ‘US dollars. Or the equivalent in *markkaa* paid into the Bank of Finland.’

‘Well, that can be arranged. What am I getting for my money?’

He smiled. ‘Not what you British would call the “dog’s bollocks”, I don’t think.’ Green was taken aback by the expression, spoken in English. McGregor must have been giving him lessons. Shevchenko carried on regardless. ‘But anything a low-ranking KGB officer can find out that will help keep the peace between the East and the West.’

So, he was KGB. Or so he said. That would have explained his composure despite Green’s surprise appearance. At the next home match, an exciting 5-4 win in overtime against Espoo Blues, Shevchenko showed Green his credentials and handed over his first batch of materials. Green had harboured doubts about how valuable his product would be; he wouldn’t have been the first agent who’d tried to get out of a financial mess on the back of some flashy-looking intel which was either out of date or downright false. Sure enough, some of the stuff was rehashed material, but there was also some new information on Soviet troop deployment in Afghanistan. PELICAN was also providing intel of this kind, but Shevchenko’s material acted as confirmation, as well as contributing new details of, for example, the situation at Bagram airbase, where the Mi-24 Hinds were located. This was of particular interest to the SIS. These helicopter gunships ruled the

airways over the local countryside, including the Panjshir valley, where the SIS were providing training and support to mujahedeen guerrillas.

Green took the package back to the embassy for Philip Norrington to look it over in the safe room, which was no bigger than a prison cell.

‘Well,’ said Norrington, ‘it looks like you’ve got yourself a new asset. What are you calling him?’

‘KORCHNOI.’

‘Okay. You’re convinced he’s not a plant?’

Green shrugged. ‘As far as I can be. Remember, we approached him, not the other way round.’

‘True. But you don’t think it was all a bit too easy, maybe?’

Green shrugged again. ‘Maybe, but he’s obviously eager to help “keep the peace between the East and the West”. A noble aim, don’t you think?’

Norrington glared at him over the top of his reading glasses. ‘Michael, are you really so naïve ...?’ Green’s lips twitched, almost imperceptibly. Waddington snorted. ‘All right. I get it. It’s the money, stupid.’

Green grinned. ‘Yes. I had a word with your pal McGregor. Apparently, KORCHNOI’s wife was on the point of leaving him. The money we’re giving him has probably saved his marriage.’ He nodded towards the package he was still holding in his hand. ‘And some of that is good stuff.’

‘Fair enough.’ Norrington laid out the documents on the table in front of him and rifled through the pages. ‘You’re right: the intel on Afghanistan isn’t half bad.’ He looked up. ‘I think this will go down well with the Cousins. Go see Walt Koslowski.’

Koslowski hadn’t gone overboard after he’d read through the documents in the American Embassy safe room. Green explained that the material came from KORCHNOI, a brand-new source.

Walt pursed his lips and rocked his head from side to side.

‘Well, Mikey,’ he said. ‘It’s not the worst product I’ve ever seen.’

‘It’s heart-warming,’ Green said, ‘to see the depth of your gratitude.’

‘You betcha.’



## Chapter Nine

*Helsinki—Prague, June/July 1982*

Spring slipped into summer, having hardly made its presence felt. The temperature rose to a comfortable level in the low- to mid-sixties. The days were longer and generally sunny. With the ice hockey season in summer recess, communication with KORCHNOI was conducted via dead drops. He continued to provide up-to-date intel on developments in Afghanistan, but was able to identify other KGB agents working in Helsinki under diplomatic cover, which was useful for confirmation purposes. Nothing was done about the information: expelling their intelligence officers would not only have provoked a reciprocal process by the Soviets, it would also have run the risk of exposing KORCHNOI. Apart from providing his own product, he played a significant role in helping to continue to disguise the existence of PELICAN. The latter's product could be shared with the Cousins, as if it came from KORCHNOI, thus avoiding putting at risk Pavel Souček, who continued to pass over invaluable material. The relationship between the British and the Americans had rarely been better. Walt Koslowski had even bought Green a beer from time to time.

Nonetheless, Green couldn't help be anxious about PELICAN, not just because his material was the more valuable. Pavel Souček was running the greater risk, being constantly under the eye of his military colleagues and the StB. In addition, there was the complication of COSSACK. PELICAN was being kept under the radar, unknown even to the CIA, other than the Director, but that state of affairs could change at any moment. Matt Waddington had added two new junior SIS officers to the embassy in Prague, Thomas Cowdrey and Gerald McSprague, inevitably known as Tom and Jerry. They serviced PELICAN's dead-drop sites and on his regular visits, one or other would give Green a lift to the Vinohradská hospital near the restaurant on Šrobárova. Whoever drove parked outside the Radiotherapy and Oncology Clinic, displaying a fake hospital patient's pass on the dashboard, and awaited Green's return. Neither knew exactly where he was going. They never followed the same route twice and the journey to and from the embassy took at least twice as long as it should have, because of extensive countersurveillance measures. In fact, it seemed to Green they made a bit of a song and dance about it, but as they had both recently graduated from the training school, he made allowances.

Generally, PELICAN seemed to Green to be in good spirits. His wife, Lenka, was very happy in their new home and Souček continued to be well regarded by the Warsaw Pact

High Command. He would often spend time at Moscow's Voroshilov Academy for advanced officer training and enjoyed a close relationship with Marshal Kulikov, commander of the Warsaw Pact forces. The more trusted he became, the higher he rose in the military hierarchy. But this was a double-edged sword. While his access to top-secret material increased, so also did the scrutiny he felt himself to be under. One time, he tried to make a joke of it. 'Listen, my friend,' he said to Green, 'none of them suspects me of being a spy. They have decided, the geniuses that they are, that if I seem tense or anxious, this is natural for a middle-aged man having an affair! I do not dispel such rumours.' Yet, Green could tell that he was under great strain. He'd only been in place for a few months, and sometimes a joe could stay in place for years, but if they weren't caught, they all burned out eventually, and Souček's advanced position in the military hierarchy exerted tremendous pressure on him.

Towards the end of July, PELICAN requested an unscheduled meeting. Once again, Green turned up to his brother-in-law's closed restaurant, to find Souček drinking coffee sitting at a corner table. He seemed distracted, jittery even, as he smoked his Bulgarian cigarettes, and idly moved pieces about a chessboard, as if at random. Green could see he had an ugly bruise on his forehead and asked him about it.

'Ach,' Souček said, 'it is nothing. I am embarrassed to tell you of my own stupidity.'

'Come on, Pavel, you've asked me here for a reason.'

He stubbed out a cigarette. 'You're right. Last week, I was driving my Opel Senator on Na Stáhlavce. You know where I mean?'

'Sure, up by the Dukla Prague football stadium. Dead-drop site number four is nearby, isn't it?'

'Yes, that's where I was going. It was at night, and you will not be surprised to hear the streetlights were out. I had a' – he searched for the Russian word – 'a break in the tyre.'

'A puncture.'

'Yes.'

'What happened?'

'I lost control of the car and crashed into an oak tree at the side of the road. I bumped my head on the windscreen, but the seatbelt saved me from anything worse.'

'Well. It must have been upsetting, but hardly a disaster, I would have thought?'

‘Perhaps not. But that wasn’t the end of it. The front of the car had buckled, and the bonnet had sprung open. I tried turning the engine over, but all I got was a grinding noise. No sign of life at all.’

‘So, what did you do?’

‘What could I do? I set off to walk. In my briefcase were some top-secret documents I was going to leave at the dead-drop site.’

‘You didn’t think to try to find a place to hide them?’

‘Not then. As far as I could tell, there was no one about. My head was hurting. I just wanted to get home. I kept to side roads as much as I could, but I couldn’t avoid Československé Armády. You know, the main road from Vítězně Square?’

Green nodded.

‘Anyway, I realised there was a car slowly following me. *Then* I wished I’d hidden the package when I got out of the car.’

‘What did you do?’

‘Again, what *could* I do? I kept my head down and struggled on.’

‘Well, you’re here now. You obviously got away. How did you manage that?’

‘Luck. I have never heard the sound of a police siren with such relief. If it had been the StB, I would have been done for. But the regular police ... I showed them my military credentials, passed round my cigarettes and shared a joke about the rubbishness of Russian cars.’

Souček smiled, but it was a grim smile and Green could detect the fear and anxiety that had prompted him to tell that story in such detail. He stubbed out his cigarette and reached for the packet, but thought better of it and pushed it away.

‘Morits,’ he said. There is something you can do for me.’

‘Of course, Pavel. If I can, I will.’

Green knew Souček hadn’t called an unscheduled meeting just to tell him that story. There was something important on his mind.

‘Thank you, my friend. What I want. What I would like ...’

Green had the sense to say nothing as Souček found the strength to continue.

‘Morits, I cannot be captured. I would be tortured and executed. I want a pill.’

‘A pill?’ Green was stumped. Had he understood him properly?

‘Yes. A pill for ... Oh, what’s the damn word? Yes, I’ve got it: самоубийство! That’s it. I want a pill for самоубийство.’

Suicide. He wanted a suicide pill.

\*

All of this was on Green’s mind as he boarded a flight to Prague, some four weeks later. After much discussion back at Century House, it had been agreed that PELICAN should be given his suicide pill. His insistence that, were he to be arrested, he would be tortured and executed was accepted, as was Green’s assessment that he was a stable and strong-minded individual who would use the pill only as a last resort. SIS technicians had concealed it in a cigarette lighter, which Green was carrying in the diplomatic bag.

This time, Tom drove him to the hospital. He approached the restaurant warily. It was a Wednesday evening and the place was reasonably busy. Souček’s brother-in-law, Rosticky, greeted Green warmly and took him upstairs to his apartment. Green found Souček ensconced in an armchair in the sitting room, to one side of an open fire. He was smoking a cigarette and swirling an amber liquid in a brandy glass. He put them down on a side table and jumped up.

‘Morits! *Dobrý den*. How are you?’

Green held out his hand to shake, but Souček grabbed his arm and pulled him in for a hug.

‘I am well, Pavel,’ Green said as he pulled away, ‘and am pleased to see you also looking in good health.’

Souček smiled, waved Green to an armchair on the other side of the fire, and offered him a brandy.

‘It’s French,’ Souček said. ‘Martell. One of the perks of being a member of the military elite.’

He poured Green a good measure and they clinked glasses. The cognac was indeed very good, if not quite up to the standard of the Travellers Club. Green studied Souček. In point of fact, he didn’t look as well as Green had said he did. The bruise on his forehead had faded, but his face looked grey and lined.

‘Morits,’ he said, ‘I have a present for you.’ He began to turn towards the side table.

‘Hang on, Pavel,’ Green said. ‘I have something for *you*.’ He rummaged in his shoulder bag, pulled out the lighter and handed it over. Green showed him how to extract the pill.

‘And it works as an ordinary lighter?’ Souček asked.

‘It does. Try it.’

Souček flicked open the lighter and a strong blue-yellow flame leapt up.

‘Excellent,’ he said. ‘I cannot thank you enough.’ His face momentarily took on a sombre expression, but soon broke into a smile. ‘My turn,’ he said, picking up a small package in shiny wrapping paper and handing it to Green. It felt chunky as he turned it over in his hand, as you do for no good reason. Opening it carefully, he uncovered a blue hinged box with *Sekonda* embossed on the lid. Inside was a battery-operated watch with a gold wristband. It had an ‘M’ engraved on the back.

‘I got it in Moscow,’ Souček said. He beamed. ‘Another perk.’

‘It’s magnificent,’ Green said. ‘Thank you so much. I can’t—’

‘Really, Morits, it is nothing. In any case, I have another gift for you. Possibly a better one.’

‘Oh? What is it?’

‘It’s something I overheard in Moscow. A major-general in the KGB was talking to an army brigadier-general – there are many generals in Moscow – and there was a lot of laughter and mutual back-slapping. I picked up a reference to COSSACK, about him “fucking the brain out” of some South American woman, although “woman” wasn’t the word they used. I’m sure it was something much more derogatory, but that bit of Russian slang isn’t in my vocabulary. Does this make sense to you, Morits?’

‘Do you know, Pavel, it just might.’

They talked some more about the state of affairs in the eastern bloc, his domestic life and the mechanics of operating as an asset. After another brandy or two, Souček handed over half a dozen rolls of film and a sheaf of photocopied documents, which Green stuffed into his shoulder bag. After some protracted leave-taking, Rosicky showed him out. By then it was dark out and the streetlighting was patchy. The warmth of the day was seeping away. Green set off towards the hospital, going over in his mind the implications of what Pavel had told him about COSSACK and his ‘South American woman’. But he still paid careful attention to his surroundings and as he walked along Šrobárova, Green noticed on the corner with Pisecka a stationary Fiat Mirafiori, with two men in the front seats, one of whom was bending over the other to get a light for his cigarette. They were both wearing lightweight coats and trilby-style hats. They might not have been StB, he

thought, but then again, he might have been Bruce Springsteen. Had they followed Tom? He didn't think so. As usual, his driver had taken meticulous precautions. Probably, they were just trawling for anyone looking suspicious, playing their favourite game of 'harass the citizen'. Maybe they would take no interest in a single pedestrian going about his business. But it was a risk; apart from anything else, the Czech secret service officers would regularly be shown photos of known or suspected foreign agents.

Green's shoulder bag with its illicit packages weighed heavily on his shoulder. In theory, his diplomatic status should have enabled him to refuse to allow it to be searched. He wasn't going to bet his life, or rather PELICAN's, on such niceties. What to do? Hope they hadn't seen him and turn back to the restaurant and set out again later? Carry on as if everything was normal? Make a dash for it and hope to lose them in the backstreets or the hospital grounds? Without making a positive decision, Green walked on, increasing his speed just a little. If he just kept going, he reasoned, he'd soon reach the hospital. Then what? Head for the car? Last resort. Better to try to shake them, assuming they really were StB.

Green reached a right turn onto Vlašimská, which he nearly took on autopilot. But he carried an image of a map of the area in his head. There was an intersection after a hundred metres or so with Bratří Čapků. Turn left and he'd end up at the hospital, but turn the other way and the road took a dogleg right that would bring him back onto Šrobárova. Green didn't want to do that. He could have kept going down Vlašimská, but it would have been easy for the Fiat to follow him. Instead, he took the next left into Náměstí Jiřího z Lobkovic. Green looked around. He could see a couple of people on the other side of the square, but no one was paying attention to him. On his right-hand side there was a row of beech trees. He looked behind him: no sign of the Fiat following. Green took out a pencil torch from his inside pocket and shone it at the base of the trees. He could make out a cavity among the roots of one of them. He quickly took PELICAN's packages out of his shoulder bag and stuffed them into it, covering them with earth and leaves. Standing back, he couldn't see them and everything looked perfectly natural. At least he was no longer carrying the incriminating films and documents, but he still didn't want to get caught and have to answer questions about his actions, especially so close to Rosicky's restaurant.

Green moved on quickly and turned left again into Slezká. He knew this would bring him to the other end of Pisecka and he'd be able to see if the Fiat was still parked there. It wasn't. Okay. Perhaps it had simply driven off, the men inside giving no thought to him. If he just kept going, once he'd crossed Jičínská he'd have the chance to lose himself in a quiet residential area of Vinohrady. Green realised he was also quite close to the Flora metro station. He was tempted, but instinct warned him not to confine himself underground. He looked behind him again: still no sign of the Fiat following. Willing himself not to run, in a few minutes he reached the main road, which was a one-way street. There was some traffic about and cars were parked on both sides of the road. Some of the streetlights were out. As the traffic cleared, he stepped off the kerb behind a parked car. All of a sudden, Green heard the roar of an engine and there on his right, going the wrong way, a car was approaching, fast. The last thing he saw in the gloomy half-light was a figure, wearing a hat, hunched over the steering wheel. Then darkness.





**Part II**  
***Middle Game***



## Chapter Ten

*Washington DC, April 1983*

Mel O'Rourke first met Mitchell Masterton at a joint CIA/FBI counterintelligence task force meeting held at FBI headquarters, the J. Edgar Hoover Building at 935 Pennsylvania Avenue. The meeting was held on the second floor below ground in 'the vault', a safe room, also known as a "SCIF", a so-called sensitive compartmented information facility. She was the first to arrive, and having dumped her bag and papers on the large rectangular table that dominated the room, she wandered over to the coffee machine on a side-table in the corner. The door opened and she turned to see two men obviously sharing a joke enter the room. Newly arrived in Washington, having spent seven years in the FBI field office in Philadelphia, she had never met either of them. But she recognised them, having taken the trouble to look through photos of all the members of the task force. The younger, taller one, with bushy hair and aviator glasses, was Masterton. Him, O'Rourke knew by reputation, a reputation for drinking, womanising and fucking things up. Yet, it seemed that when Masterton left Helsinki just before Christmas to return to Washington, it was for a promotion to the Soviet/East European Counterintelligence Division at Langley. His companion, all-together smoother looking, with well-cut short hair and a neat moustache, was his boss, Benton Adams. If Masterton was taller, Adams was bigger, with broad shoulders, a barrel chest and hams for hands.

At first, they didn't notice O'Rourke, carrying on chatting and laughing as they picked out places to sit, then Masterton looked up and watched her dealing with the coffee-making paraphernalia.

'Oh!' he said. 'Hi, hon. We're friends from the other side of the Potomac. Do you think you could fix us a couple cups of Joe? And I didn't have time to photocopy a paper we could probably use at today's meeting. Could you sort that out for us?' He unleashed his best smile, showing nicotine-stained teeth.

*Friends from the other side of the Potomac?* That was one way to put it. She'd quickly learned that in the FBI these 'friends' from the CIA were routinely known as 'T-Bars': Those Bastards Across the River.

O'Rourke returned Masterton's smile. 'It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm sure I can rustle up a secretary to help you with your document and please do help yourselves to coffee.'

She walked round the table towards them and held out her hand. 'I'm Senior Special Agent Mel O'Rourke.'

Adams smirked, taking her hand, while Masterton just looked thunderstruck. 'M-Mel,' he stammered. He rummaged through his papers until he found the agenda for that day's meeting, running his finger down the short list of attendees. 'Oh,' he said. 'Here it is, right enough. "Mel O'Rourke". Well, well, whodda thought it?'

He eyed her quizzically. 'Mel as in Melissa,' she said, 'but nobody calls me that.'

'Ah, I see,' said Masterton. 'Back home in Iowa we'd call you "Missy", get what I'm saying?'

'I'm sure you would,' O'Rourke said, 'but I don't think it would suit me, get what I'm saying?'

She wasn't really that pissed at Masterton for assuming she was a secretary or some other kind of dogsbody. It was par for the course. If anything, it was even worse in the FBI than the CIA, though slow progress had been made in the ten years since Hoover's death. It was a cliché that women had to be twice as good as men to be regarded as anywhere near equal, but that didn't make it any less true. It had started with the fitness tests in training at the FBI Academy, newly located near Quantico, Virginia. The men automatically assumed that a woman wouldn't be able to compete on equal terms and it was true she couldn't keep up with the best of them, some of whom had been track and field stars or football jocks at college. And it didn't help that there was a separate points-scale for women. But she was damned if she was going to get through as some kind of affirmative action girlie. You needed twelve points across the four fitness tests: sit-ups, three-hundred-yard sprint, push-ups and one-and-a-half-mile run. The sprint was okay, O'Rourke having played field hockey at college, where her speed had given her an edge, and the gym tests were just a matter of putting in the hours. But the run! It wasn't her thing at all. Knowing it would be part of the drill, before she enrolled she paid a visit to an old friend from UCLA, Francie Larrieu, an Olympic fifteen-hundred-metre runner. She gave O'Rourke some tips and recommended some exercise routines, and even did a few training-runs with her. In the end, O'Rourke did a personal best for the run and got thirty-four points overall – easily top woman – which was the equivalent of twenty-three on the men's scale. In truth, she aced it, beating half the men in the process.

There was more macho bullshit on the 'defensive tactics' course. O'Rourke boxed against other women, but the judo-style grappling training was mixed. If one of the übermenschen could dump you on your keister, be sure he would. But the men had no physical advantage on the real-life, operational skills exercises. She made sure that every one of the assholes who put her on the mat ended up with a great big paintball on his combat jacket. Hah! She did all right too at the academics – law, ethics, investigative techniques and what have you – shot as well as anyone and better than most, and came first in the class on the case exercises on the 'streets' of Hogan's Alley, the Academy's mock town.

Even though she'd done so well at the Academy, O'Rourke wasn't the first to get a posting after graduation. Or the second. Or the twentieth, if it came to that. But eventually, Philadelphia came up and off she went. Once there, she was determined she was going to be the best they had ever seen, so naturally made exactly the kind of rookie mistakes she was determined to avoid. But she got lucky. Supervisory Special Agent Patrick O'Callaghan took her under his wing. Paddy O'Callaghan was in his sixties when she arrived and she thought him only slightly to the left of Genghis Khan. He'd thought Hoover walked on water and that Nixon was the best president ever, right up to Watergate and even beyond. Vietnam War draft-dodgers should have been strung up by their most sensitive parts, Civil Rights had gone too far, and as for female FBI agents ... well. And yet. Whether because of the Irish connection or because he looked on O'Rourke as the daughter he'd never had, Paddy looked after her. Not that he went soft on her; quite the reverse. When she fucked up, he let her know about it. And how. But he made sure she got proper cases to handle, increasingly complex as she gained experience, and partnered her up with guys who weren't complete assholes. Well, he at least tried to. Eventually you earn some grudging respect, but you'd better be prepared to work longer hours than anyone, be smarter than anyone and be more persistent than anyone. That was O'Rourke and it cost her her marriage. Phil was a good guy, but he was a civilian, and he wasn't ready for a partner who was absent more than she was present. He complained that even when she was there, physically, *mentally* she was somewhere else.

But living for the job also got O'Rourke the biggest case of her life. She was doing routine surveillance on some suspected radicals, with her partner Ben Hendrix, when trawling through hours of audio tapes, she picked up references to a couple of names that weren't on their radar. After two months' solid investigation they uncovered two 'illegals'

– Soviet intelligence officers without diplomatic cover. They were a husband-and-wife team who had been living and working in the USA for twenty years. It meant a dream job in New York for Hendrix and promotion to the intelligence division in DC for O'Rourke.

\*

The task force meeting did not go well. Being patronised by men in suits was water off a duck's back, as far as O'Rourke was concerned. Nor was she surprised by the degree of mutual suspicion, if not downright hostility, between the two agencies. The posturing and game-playing were, she supposed, par for the course. But if that interfered with them getting down to some serious business, then it became an issue. Apart from Masterton and Adams, who was in the chair, there were two other CIA agents, both also from the Soviet/East European Division, and two of O'Rourke's FBI colleagues, neither of whom she'd gotten to know yet. It began well enough, with some routine exchange of information about known or suspected Soviet intelligence officers working out of the embassy. But then, one of her colleagues – Ricardo González – made an offhand remark about the increasing difficulty in identifying which so-called diplomats were actually KGB or GRU agents. This prompted one of the Agency guys – Mackenzie Webster – to make some smartass 'joke' about the FBI not being able to recognise a Red if he hit them over the head with a bottle of Stolli. There was a bit of back and forth about the FBI being flatfoot cops in cheap suits and the CIA being so far in denial about the existence of traitors that they would swear blind Kim Philby had been given a bad press. Adams did his best to rescue the meeting, but things continued to go downhill. The most important item on the agenda should have been the continuing successes of the KGB against the US intelligence services, but the discussion was little more than desultory. They hardly addressed the most urgent item on the agenda: the growing number of compromised agents. 'Compromised'. What a weasel word. It made it sound as if they had been caught with their dicks in their hands, not that they'd been tortured for weeks in Moscow, then shot, which was their presumed fate. And the numbers were growing. Not that the unmasking of assets was the only problem. By all accounts, the KGB had run a number of successful operations against the CIA. Given that getting information like that from the Agency was about as easy as getting milk from a prairie dog, in all probability things were even worse than that. It suggested that the Soviets possessed a detailed understanding of the Agency's inner workings.

Another of O'Rourke's colleagues – Chester McCain, one of the few black agents at the Bureau and therefore liable, like her, to be dismissed as a 'minority hire' – raised the question of a possible mole. He looked to be in his forties, with close-cropped hair, already thinning, and the admirable tendency of thinking before talking. Here, he was referring to the common knowledge that an asset of the SIS had claimed to have watertight information about a traitor in the Agency, codename COSSACK. As yet, the Agency's internal investigation had turned up nothing significant. Assuming there had been an investigation, which is exactly what McCain wanted to know. Adams gave him his most condescending, shit-eating smile.

'Well there, Mr ... ah ... Mr McCain,' he said. O'Rourke, he'd called *Mel-issa* at every turn. 'What can I tell you?' How about the truth, she thought? 'I'm sure you realise there are always rumours about the existence of moles inside both our organisation and your own.'

'There's more here than mere rumours,' said McCain. 'For a start, there's the number of agents who've been burned.' O'Rourke gave a silent cheer. As a euphemism, 'burned' was much nearer the knuckle than 'compromised'. Her FBI colleague kept going. 'And there's the intel from the Brits, which—'

'Sure,' said Adams. 'There's always intel, Mr McCain. You'll learn that soon enough. But it isn't always on the money, no sir.'

Masterton, who up to that point had given a first-rate impression of a man half-asleep, suddenly came to life. 'We don't even know for sure who the source of that intel was,' he said. 'It's not unknown for a source to make stuff up, maybe to screw a bit more money out of his handler, or just because he thinks that's what the guy wants to hear. Get what I'm saying?'

'I do,' said McCain. 'But our assets are being burned, and that's a fact.'

Webster intervened. 'Look, Chester,' he said, 'there are any number of possible explanations for why a few assets become compromised.'

That word again. O'Rourke said, 'It's more than a few, isn't it? And it's still happening.'

'Listen, h . . .' interrupted Masterton. If he called her 'hon' again, or 'honey', she was going to pull out her service revolver and empty the cylinder into his smug face. He backtracked. 'I mean, Mel, it's the price of doing business, get what I'm saying? These guys know the score. No one makes them turn double.'

That was debatable, in some cases at least, but she wasn't going to make an issue of it. Anyway, McCain jumped in.

'What possible explanations?' he asked. 'Mac, you said there were "any number" of possible explanations.'

'Oh, right,' said Webster. He shrugged. 'Well, could be that it's all a coincidence. Each case has its own particular circumstances: bad luck, bad tradecraft, a tip off. Like that.'

'Seriously?' O'Rourke said. 'You believe in the tooth fairy and Santa Claus too?'

Webster's partner, Franklin Stephenson, came to his defence. 'It is possible, Ms O'Rourke. These things do happen. And if there is a connection, I'd say it's likely to be that the Reds have somehow gotten into our communications systems.'

'But if that were the case,' said Ricardo González, 'it'd be a serious breach in its own right. Steps would have to be taken.'

Adams weighed in. 'Sure. Steps will be taken. There are ways to check out if we've been breached.'

O'Rourke thought about that. Probably the best way would be to put out disinformation. For example, a senior CIA officer could go to Athens or Bangkok or Bogotá, or Timbuktu if it came to that, anywhere where there were known KGB officers operating undercover. Then he'd report back to Langley, through the normal communication channels, that he'd recruited a specific KGB officer as an agent. Then you'd sit back and see what happened to him, if anything. Repeat ad nauseam.

'But that hasn't happened yet?' she asked, straining to keep a note of incredulity out of her voice.

Adams gave her the benefit of that shit-eating smile of his.

'Well now, *Melissa*, let's just say these things are ongoing and leave it at that. What do you say?'

\*

What could she say? The meeting moved on and petered out in a desultory fashion. O'Rourke took her frustration back up to the office and knocked on the door of her boss, Supervisory Special Agent William Finnegan. He waved her in, pointed to one of the armchairs and set about fixing both of them a cup of coffee.

'Judging by your body language,' he said, setting the coffee down on a low table and settling himself into the armchair opposite her, 'that didn't go so well.'



O'Rourke made a noise with her lips. 'You could say that. I see now why you decided to give it a miss.'

'The benefits of rank, Mel, the benefits of rank. Any time not spent in the company of that horse's patootie, Benton Adams, is time very well spent.'

'No argument from me, Bill. Could he be a more patronising prick? And as for his side-kick, Masterton, I swear he was half in the bag.'

'No surprise there. Who all else was on their team?'

'Webster and Stephenson. Know 'em?'

'Yeah. Frank Stephenson's okay, but Webster's got his head so far up his ass he could eat his own kidneys. Get anything useful?'

She snorted. 'You're kidding, right? They couldn't be more in denial about the possibility of there being a mole in the Agency. I just don't get it.'

Finnegan put down his empty coffee cup and leaned forward. 'No? First of all, they have no intention of recreating the paranoia and mistrust of the Angleton years. And who can blame them? Second of all, you have to remember that as far as the Brahmins at the top are concerned, there are no moles in the CIA, there never have been and there never will be. It would be like accusing a Company man of improving his lie in the rough on the eighteenth. It's unthinkable.'

O'Rourke didn't fully understand his allusion, golf not being high up on her list of sports, but the gist was clear enough and accorded with what she'd heard. It was common knowledge that the culture at Langley was such that the idea of traitors in the ranks *was* unthinkable. Company men (and they were mainly men) were in a class of their own. The normal rules that applied to ordinary people did not apply to them. Sure, they might, like Masterton, drink too much, screw around too much and maybe even make a mess of their finances, but that was just the price to be paid for working in 'the wilderness of mirrors', the chaotic world of espionage.

'What does that mean?' she asked. 'You're not saying there won't be an investigation, are you?'

'Oh, there'll be an investigation, all right. Just don't expect it to go anywhere.'

'Then, shouldn't they outsource the investigation? Give it to us, for example?'

Finnegan laughed. 'Seriously? Do you really think they'd let the Feds in to rummage through their panty drawer?'

‘So, they end up marking their own homework, is that it?’

‘You could put it that way.’

Except, for once, Bill Finnegan was wrong. A new broom had blown into Langley, in the shape of Joseph Philips Baxter, recently brought in from the National Security Agency by Bill Casey to be Director of the Office of Security, the CIA’s internal watchdog. Not only was Baxter an outsider, he was a believer: he was convinced that the only tenable explanation for all the KGB’s successes was a mole, probably someone fairly high up in the Agency. He also believed that the Soviet/East European Division was the key: it oversaw the recruitment and running of all the CIA’s assets inside the Warsaw Pact countries. He was adamant it could not be involved in any investigations; there had to be fresh eyes, untainted by preconceptions or prior allegiances. So, he set up a task force, codename RACETRACK, consisting of five people. He invited in the FBI, which meant O’Rourke and McCain. There were two CIA agents, neither known to her, called Catherine Gordon and Robert Olsson. They were not Langley insiders. Gordon had recently returned from a decade-long tour of duty in Cairo, Tunis and Rabat. Olsson had been station chief in Buenos Aires and had been about to take up a senior position in the Office of Security. The fifth member of the task force was the most surprising in O’Rourke’s eyes. He was the British SIS officer who had apparently been instrumental in securing the intel about the alleged mole, codename COSSACK. The name of the officer was Michael Green.

## Chapter Eleven

*Washington DC, April 1983*

It was Green's first ever time in the USA. His first time anywhere outside the UK since the car had run him over in Prague. Technically, he was attached to the staff of the British Embassy, which wasn't located on the so-called Embassy Row itself, but further along Massachusetts Avenue NW, up by the Naval Observatory. In practice, he was the liaison officer with the CIA, just as he had been in Helsinki. The difference here was that he was going to work with the FBI too, as part of the RACETRACK task force. Just as in Helsinki, though, he had an agent to run, having inherited KOJAK from his predecessor, who'd gone off to be station chief in Bonn. KOJAK was actually Constantin Petrovich Vorontsov, notionally second assistant secretary to the head of the Soviet trade delegation, but in reality, a lieutenant in the KGB. By all accounts, his product wasn't of the highest quality, but the SIS couldn't afford to be fussy; Soviet assets in Washington were as rare as hens' teeth. Green couldn't help remembering Oleg, not only with regret, but also with a tinge of guilt. A lot had happened since his death in Helsinki, and he'd moved on. He was comforted by the thought that, to the best of his knowledge, PELICAN, Pavel Souček, was still alive and well in Prague.

Green was to meet Constantin across the Potomac by the Iwo Jima Memorial, on the northern edge of the Arlington National Cemetery. With a photograph to guide him, he found Constantin taking photos of the memorial, for all the world just another tourist enjoying one of Washington's most popular sites. Indeed, there were many tourists around on a warm and sunny Sunday afternoon, which meant that they could blend into the crowd, but also that anyone watching them could find cover as well. Green had to hope that the countersurveillance measures he'd taken, and assumed Constantin had too, would have kept them safe. Green had hopped on and off buses, changed taxis, and ended up on the metro, or 'subway' as he supposed he should call it. 'Moscow Rules' were still the watchwords.

Constantin was tall and well-built, with a mane of dark brown hair, longer than was the norm for Russians, that belied his cryptonym. He was dressed in a leather blouson, a navy-blue Ralph Lauren polo shirt and taupe-coloured chinos. A heavy moustache made him look a little older than his twenty-seven years. His skin was slightly pock-marked, but

didn't show the tell-tale signs of the vodka-drinker, as was often the case with Soviet operatives. Green made eye contact and made a 'let's move' motion with his head. They strolled through the Arlington Ridge Park and into the cemetery via the Ord-Weitzel gate.

There were plenty of people in the cemetery too, tourists mingling with families visiting the graves of their loved ones. Green and Constantin wandered around, talking in English, keeping an eye open for anyone paying them too close attention. The meeting was no more than an introductory get-together, mainly to confirm arrangements for future contact, particularly the dead drops and signal protocols. They agreed to keep the arrangements as they were: dead drops in Rock Creek Park, a massive area, wild in places, with multiple potential sites. They continued chatting as they walked, and Green could detect that his companion was nervous, agitated even. Moving away from the main pathways, they found a quiet place behind a clump of silver birch trees.

Green placed a hand on Constantin's arm. 'Listen,' he said, 'I can tell you're feeling anxious. What's going on?'

Constantin nodded, then reached inside his jacket pocket and pulled out a packet of Camels. Green declined his offer of a cigarette and he lit one up and inhaled deeply.

'You are right, of course, Michael,' he said. 'I am feeling quite disturbed.'

He took a couple of drags on his cigarette.

'Because?' Green asked.

'I am worried that no longer I am trusted. Now, I am looking over my shoulder always. I know, of course, you will think this is nothing, that I imagine. But I feel it. I am suspect.'

This was nothing new. Every joe lived in a constant state of fear and apprehension. He could be unmasked at any time. More often than not, these anxieties were unfounded. Until they weren't.

'Is it just a feeling?' Green asked. 'Or is there something more concrete?'

Constantin finished his cigarette, dropped it on the ground and stubbed it out with his foot. He shrugged. 'Looks. Glances. Mumbled conversations. Sudden silences. Nothing definite.'

Green thought about this. It could be something or nothing. But why take the chance? 'Keep the joe happy' was just about number one in the handler's handbook. He had an idea.

'Okay, Constantin. I think there's a way to help you out, here.'

'Yes?'

'Yes. Look, as a KGB officer, you're expected to cultivate contacts—'

'Cul-tivate?'

'Yeah, you know, meet people, maybe make friends with them? People who could be useful?'

'Ah, yes, I see. This is correct.'

'And where possible, pitch them, I mean, try to recruit them?'

'This not so much. I am only lieutenant. Is job of more superior officer.'

'But if someone approached you? Someone who had information to give and wanted to give it to you? Would that be allowed?'

'This, yes, I think so. Under supervision, you understand. Would be good training for me.'

'Excellent. Then that's what we'll do. We'll find you an asset.'

\*

Arriving for the first meeting of the RACETRACK task force, Green felt similar emotions to a boy attending his first day at school, a mixture of excitement and trepidation. Excitement at the prospect of being part of the team that tracked down and captured the mole; trepidation at the thought of having to prove himself to experienced FBI and CIA agents. He had been looking forwards to getting to see inside the famous CIA headquarters in Langley, but that had turned out not to be the case. The Director of the Office of Security, Joseph Philips Baxter, had decided to keep it out of Langley, and, in particular, away from the Soviet/East European Division. Hence, the task force's centre of operations was to be the CIA field office on 2430 E St NW, just across from the State Department. Green presented himself at the reception and produced his SIS credentials. The official behind the desk addressed him politely, found his name on a list and handed him a security pass card and lanyard, but instead of telling him a room number and directing him to the bank of elevators, asked him to wait. She beckoned over a security guard who guided Green away from the foyer and down a narrow corridor to a single elevator, which he summoned with a key. Inside there were only up and down buttons, no floor numbers, and the guard accompanied Green up to whichever floor was its sole destination. Green might have had questions, but nothing in the guard's demeanour encouraged him to ask them.

He left Green at the door of an office with no nameplate or other insignia. The window blinds were down. Green paused for a moment and took a deep breath. The door was opened to his knock by a woman whose name badge identified her as Catherine Gordon, appointed by Philips Baxter as the task-force leader. She was an unlikely-looking spy, appearing, in Green's judgement, to be not far from retirement age, with old-fashioned thick-framed spectacles, and a thick mop of greying hair, struggling to escape from various clips, slides and barrettes. She looked comfortable in a roll-neck sweater, matching cardigan and pleated skirt.

He held out his hand. 'Michael Green,' he said. They shook, her grip no less firm than his.

'Well,' she said, 'I'd kinda worked that out for myself. I know Olsson, O'Rourke's a female and McCain's black!' She pointed at him. 'You're the first here.'

Green couldn't tell if this was merely an observation, a rebuke, or an expression of surprise.

'Sorry,' Green said. 'First day at school. Wanted to make a good impression.'

Gordon made a noise, half laugh, half snort. 'I'm just finishing up some photocopying. Why don't you get yourself a coffee and sit yourself down until the others arrive?'

He did as she suggested, noting that Gordon already had a coffee by her side at the copier and took a seat at the table in the centre of the office, busying himself with laying out in front of him pens, pencils and notebook. Gordon finished her photocopying, collected the papers together, giving them a sharp rap on the machine, before bringing them and her New England Patriots mug over to the table and taking a seat. They drank their coffee in silence for a moment, neither of them quite sure how to begin a conversation.

Green said, 'May I ask you something, Ms Gordon?'

'I expect so. And it's Catherine.'

'Okay. Back in the UK, female intelligence officers in senior posts are rarer than kangaroo droppings. So, I'm a little surprised that the CIA would put a woman in charge of this task force.'

Gordon made that noise again. Perhaps that was just how she laughed.

'I've been around so long, maybe folks have forgotten that I *am* a woman. You know, I came in right at the start, back in forty-seven. I was only a year or so out of the University of Connecticut.'

'You must have been young to be an agent,' Green said.

Definitely a laugh. 'No, Michael, I wasn't hired as an agent. Funnily enough, I joined the CIA because I thought I'd get the chance to travel, but the only work open to women in the Agency at that time was clerical and I joined the typing pool right here in Washington.'

'Not Langley?'

'Nope. Wasn't built then. In those days we were stationed in the old World-War-Two barracks on Constitution Avenue. Sometimes, waiting at the bus stop, I saw Harry Truman practising his putting on the green behind the White House.'

'Good to know he was able to enjoy some down time. What did you do?'

'Oh, it was very exciting work, typing out the names of Russian scientists from journals and other sources onto index cards.'

This time there was just a hint of a smile and she could have been mistaken for your favourite indulgent aunt.

Green laughed. 'But I presume you didn't stay in the typing pool for long.'

'About a year. The fact that I spoke French and German and had majored in politics didn't count for much, so it took a while to get an overseas posting and work my way up through the grades.'

'But you did.'

'I did. It took a lot of hard work and banging on doors, I can tell you. But I had one piece of luck.'

'Oh?'

'I happened to be assigned to the Helsinki Station, working as an analyst, when at the end of sixty-one Anatoliy Golytsin defected. You were stationed there—'

Just then there was a knock on the door and in came a tall black man, around forty or so, his thinning hair cropped short, followed by an even taller man, at least six-four, evidently in his sixties, but endowed with full head of thick, blond hair. McCain and Olsson, no doubt. Immediately, the door opened again and in came an attractive woman, in her early thirties, with auburn hair parted on the left, reaching just to her shoulders. Her eyes were mid-brown and there was a sprinkle of freckles across the bridge of her nose. She was slim, almost willowy, but exuded an air of toughness. Green didn't think he'd want to get on her wrong side. Introductions were made.

From her handbag Gordon took out four keys with large CIA ring-fobs and gave them out. 'Right,' she said, 'we're going to go into the operations room,' nodding towards an adjacent room to which her office formed an anteroom. 'Bring your coffee. From now on all our business will be conducted in that room. As you can see, it's windowless. It's also soundproofed. It will remain locked at all times. Access to the elevator will be tightly controlled. No agents or officials will be able to pop up for a chat. No papers are to leave the room without my say-so. Nothing that is said in there is to be communicated to anyone outside this group without my say-so. And, there's to be absolutely no smoking. Is all that clear?'

It was. If, Green thought, they hadn't known what they were letting themselves in for before, they did now.

\*

Looking around, Green gauged that the operations room was about a third bigger than Gordon's office, with filing cabinets on all four sides and the rest of the room dominated by a conference table and chairs. They all took seats at the top end, in front of a large whiteboard.

'I want everyone to know exactly what RACETRACK's brief is,' said Gordon. 'The Director of the Office of Security couldn't have been clearer: we're to work from the assumption that the reason why so many of our agents have been compromised is that there is a mole operating at the upper levels of the Agency. Something bothering you, Mel?'

Everyone turned towards her. 'No, nothing, Catherine. Sorry ... Actually, yes. It's just that "compromised" is such a bullshit word. These agents were people who risked their lives on our behalf who ended up being tortured—'

Gordon held up a hand. 'Point taken. As I was saying, our task is to unmask a traitor, to uncover the identity of COSSACK.' As if to emphasise the point, she stood up and wrote the cryptonym in large red letters on the whiteboard. 'The DOS takes the view that there have been too many cases in too short a space of time for there to have been any realistic explanation other than betrayal by a mole.' She nodded towards Green. 'That's on top of the vital intel passed on to us from Michael's source.'

Everyone looked at him. 'Who *was* your source, Michael?' asked Olsson. 'Someone reliable?'



Gordon intervened before Green could reply. 'You know better than that, Robert. The fact is, the DOS told me that we were not, and I quote, "to dick around with any other bullshit theories".'

There was an outbreak of murmuring in the room, which Gordon quickly quelled. Handing round four sets of papers from the bundle she'd brought in from the photocopier, she kept another one for herself. The top page was a list of names in chronological order, neatly typed out, and double-spaced. There were twenty-four of them. The first was dated March 1978, the most recent, from last year. Victor Oschenko, Andrei Kostadinov, Leonid Gregoriev, Oleg Tolkachevsky ... Oschenko had been in Rome, some in Moscow, Tolkachevsky in Helsinki, the others in Washington DC or New York. The rest of the documents consisted of more detailed accounts of the agents' activities in single-spaced, smaller typescript.

'Twenty-four!' O'Rourke said. 'I hadn't realised it was so many.'

'So, you see the urgency,' said Gordon. 'I know this is a failure of counterintelligence, but in point of fact this is a criminal investigation. That's why Mel and Chester are here. We need to draw up a list of possible suspects, based on opportunity, motive, personality traits.'

'But that could run into hundreds,' objected Olsson. 'Think of the number of people employed by the Agency between nineteen seventy-eight and now.'

Well,' said Gordon, 'I think we can shorten the odds just a little. There might be some outlier who could be responsible, but I don't buy it. It's got to be someone in the Soviet/Eastern Europe Division. Someone close to the action.'

There was a murmur of conversation as people began to digest the implications of what had been said. Gordon took control of the meeting again.

'Okay,' she said. 'This is what we're going to do. We need to identify the suspects and map them against the cases. We're going to go through the personnel files of all employees working in the Division during the years in question, from GS-09 and above. No one below that grade would have had sufficient access. We'll draw up a longlist of possibles. Anyone who, however unlikely, might have been in a position to know that the compromised – sorry, betrayed – spies were working for us. But not tonight. Go home. I'll get all the files we need shipped in ready for tomorrow.'

## Chapter Twelve

*Washington DC, April/May 1983,*

Over the years as an FBI agent, O'Rourke had got used to the slow grind of investigations. RACETRACK was no different, the work proceeding slowly, but steadily enough. It took the team the rest of the month to work through all the files Gordon had commandeered. At one point, Olsson chipped in, not very helpfully, 'This'll be a lot easier in the future, when all the data's computerised.' As it was, they just slogged on, listing any employee who could have had even the faintest possibility of turning out to be COSSACK. O'Rourke had come to admire Gordon, for her unflappability and organisation skills. She had got them to arrange the names on the list into three groups, or concentric circles as she called them. The inner circle, which was by far the smallest, comprised of people who'd directly recruited or handled the assets, or analysed their product; both Mitch Masterton and his boss, Benton Adams, were on the list, but that was no surprise given their roles in the Soviet/East European Division. The middle circle included all those technical and clerical personnel who'd provided the inner circle with support, and the outer circle anyone who might have conceivably heard about the agents, in one way or another. O'Rourke was disheartened to see that that still left ninety-seven names.

McCain was similarly aghast. 'How can there be so many? Ain't this supposed to be *the* most top-secret information imaginable?'

Gordon shrugged. 'It is what is. People talk. They put two and two together. You know how that goes.'

'So,' said McCain, 'that's ninety-seven staff to cross-check against twenty-four cases of lost assets.'

'Maybe, maybe not,' said Gordon. 'Looke here, eleven of those cases were concentrated from the start of eighty-one, through the middle of eighty-two. So, we'll focus on them, first up, and see where that takes us.'

She parcelled out the remaining personnel files.

'Okay,' she said. 'This time, we're looking at the files from two angles. Firstly, how likely is it that the operative could have known about the existence of the eleven assets and/or had access to their files? Secondly, dig deep into their work records, looking for anything that makes an alarm bell ring.'

'Such as?' asked Green.

'Anything. A drink problem, a drug habit, money worries, disciplinary concerns, job performance issues, adverse appraisals, sexual adventures ... That sort of thing.'

The personnel files were inconsistent in the amount of detailed information they contained, which was frustrating, but there was a particular issue that caused O'Rourke concern.

'I can't believe,' she said, 'the number of people who don't seem to have had regular polygraph tests, or don't seem to have suffered consequences for failures.'

Gordon shrugged it off. 'You have to understand,' she said, 'under different Directors, the lie-detector tests have gone up and down in importance. More down than up. Hell, they don't even take place at Langley, but at some hole-in-a-corner rented office on a Godforsaken business park out at Tysons Corner.'

O'Rourke and McCain exchanged glances. The FBI also had offices at Tysons Corner.

'Look, let's see where we get to,' Gordon said. 'If any of the ones with hinky tests also appear on our other shortlists, then we'll get them tested again, okay?'

A major problem, to O'Rourke's mind, was what counted as 'access' to the information about the eleven agents in question, assumed betrayed by COSSACK. She realised that with any given asset, only a very few people would know his cryptonym *and* real name. But she also knew that senior officers in the Soviet/East Europe Division, and some of the staff providing technical or clerical support would know sufficient details that if the case were passed on to the KGB, they would be able to do the rest.

So, it was slow going. But in the end, they were pretty confident in their conclusions, being left, finally, with a short-list of twenty-nine. Much more manageable. Gordon set out what would happen next.

'It'll be a five-stage process,' she said. 'Firstly, we'll go back over their files—'

'Again?' said McCain.

'Yes, again. Let's look at every detail of their work histories and as much of their private lives as we can get our hands on. Secondly: finances. Everything they earn, everything they spend. Every dollar, every cent. Robert, you're our financial wizard. I want you to take the lead on this. Start by sequestering their bank records.'

'I can do that.'

That was something that the CIA could do that the FBI could not; the Bureau could only subpoena bank records of individuals on whom it had opened an official case, whereas the Agency had carte blanche to look into the records of its employees.

‘Thirdly,’ Gordon went on, ‘we’ll have a chat with former Soviet agents who have recently defected. See if they’ve picked up any scuttlebutt. Chester, I think that might be a job for you.’

‘Okay, Catherine. How many are we talking about?’

‘Not sure. I’ll let you have a list. Fourthly, we’ll conduct in-depth interviews with everyone on our list. That—’

‘Won’t that be a problem?’ asked Green. ‘Won’t they go on the defensive, “clam up”, as you’d say? Demand a brief, invoke the Fifth?’

‘Not if we’re careful,’ said Gordon. ‘We’ll have to keep the interviews non-confrontational. Persuade them that it’s a fact-finding mission, tidying up loose ends. Nothing personal. Okay?’

‘Okay. That can work,’ said Green.

‘Glad you approve,’ said Gordon. ‘Finally, once we’ve eliminated as many as possible from our shortlist, we can give those that remain fresh polygraph tests.’

‘If there are any names left on our list,’ said Olsson.

‘Always the optimist, Robert, always the optimist. Let’s wrap up for tonight, and start again next week.’

‘How about a drink?’ said Green. ‘Come on, Catherine. It is the weekend.’

As he expected, she began to demur, but additional arm-twisting by Olsson and McCain persuaded her to make an exception.

‘Where to?’ McCain asked.

Gordon smiled a smile which on anyone else might have been described as mischievous.

‘I know just the place,’ she said. ‘Come on.’

She marched them all across 23<sup>rd</sup> St, along C St NW. On a side street, behind the National Academy of Science, was a glass-fronted bar, with green paint on the window frames, the door, the fascia ... Everywhere. O’Rourke sighed. Of course: an Irish bar. And not just any Irish bar: O’Rourke’s. Naturally, this caused much mirth and mockery.

‘To be sure, there’ll be free drinks all night,’ said Olsson.

They went in. O'Rourke looked around. The bar was busy, but not packed, cigarette smoke swirling up to the nicotine-stained ceiling, the smell of stale beer and whiskey competing with the appealing aroma of broiling meat, onions and fries. The din of raised TGIF voices threatened to drown out the diddly-diddly music, possibly the Pogues, blaring from the speakers.

Gordon spotted an empty booth at the back and made a beeline for it, carving her way through groups of drinkers.

'She's a force of nature, that one,' said Green, as they followed in her wake.

Settled in their seats, they ordered from a waitress in an emerald-green apron. According to her nametag, to nobody's surprise, she was called Siobhan and greeted them like her long-lost relatives, especially O'Rourke, who she instantly spotted as a refugee from 'the old country'. They ordered a pitcher of beer with a round of Jameson chasers, all except Gordon who surprised them by plumping for a Guinness. McCain insisted on a couple of family-size bags of chips.

'Right,' said Gordon. 'No shop-talk. This is hardly the place.'

'In which case,' said Green, 'why not finish off your Anatoliy Golytsin story? I'm sure everyone would be as keen to hear it as I am.'

At first, she passed, insisting no one wanted to hear her old war stories, but they all clamoured for her to begin. She even consented to having another Guinness when Siobhan returned to refill their drinks order.

'You've all heard of Golytsin, I expect.' They all nodded. 'Well, normally,' said Gordon, 'you'd hope that a proposed defection would be planned to the last detail. Everything would be in place – you know, passports, visas, identity documents, tickets, both for the joe and his family – but that wasn't the case in this instance.'

'How come?' asked Green.

'Golytsin just turned up one day, at the apartment of our Chief of Helsinki Station, Frank Friberg, wife and daughter in tow, and insisted he was going to defect, there and then. And in the middle of winter, to boot. Just before Christmas. You were there for some time, weren't you, Michael?'

'I was,' agreed Green, who appeared to be paying particular attention to Gordon's account.

'Then you'll know what I mean. Anyway—'

‘Why?’ O’Rourke asked. ‘Why did he just turn up like that, out of the blue?’

Gordon shrugged. ‘He was spooked. A secret telegram had gone missing.’

‘Did Golitsyn take it?’ O’Rourke asked.

‘No, he didn’t. But he had a whole heap of other stuff on him that he wouldn’t have wanted to be found. So, he got out. As I was saying, Frank phoned round and sent one of- ficer to the embassy to sort out the paperwork, while I drove to the office to get some money for tickets and what have you out of the strongbox. I had the key, you see. I grabbed a handful of cash – no idea how much – and set off for the airport, which if I re- member is about ten miles or so to the north. Is that about right, Michael?’ Green nod- ded. ‘Well, I had this tiny Fiat Panda, which wasn’t the greatest car to drive at the best of times, which these definitely were not.’

She sat back to take a deep swig of her Guinness. The rest of them looked at her in si- lence, each one, it seemed, trying to imagine a younger version of this redoubtable woman flogging her little car across the frozen Finnish landscape, the engine whining in complaint, the chassis shuddering.

‘It wasn’t my finest hour,’ she went on. ‘First off, I went the wrong way up a one-way street, then I managed to drive over a concrete tram stop. But I was lucky. There were no police around. And my luck held. All the while the snow was falling, and once, near the airport, I skidded and turned nearly three hundred and sixty degrees, but somehow the traffic avoided me.’

‘But you got there in one piece,’ said O’Rourke.

‘Just about. And in time to see Golytsin and his family onto a flight to Stockholm and on their way to the States.’

With that, she finished her drink, put on her coat, smoothed down her hair, put on her hat and stood up to go, wishing us all a good weekend. She took a pocketbook from her purse and put ten dollars on the table, before charting an unerring path to the door.

O’Rourke shook her head. ‘You said it, Michael. A real force of nature, right enough.’

Neither McCain or Olsson hung around much longer, either.

‘One for the road, Mel?’ asked Green.

‘Sure,’ she said, ‘why not?’

Green caught Siobhan’s eye and ordered himself a Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, which he explained to O’Rourke, was from a new craft brewery, while she stuck with the

Jameson's. There was a moment's awkward silence, then they both began to talk at once. When they'd stopped laughing, Green urged O'Rourke to go first.

'It's just that I noticed how closely you were following Catherine's story; almost as if you had a personal stake in it. Does that make sense?'

'It does. It was personal, in a way.' He must have noticed her puzzled expression. 'No, no. Of course, I wasn't actually involved. Jesus, I must have been about ten, or something.'

'What, then?'

'I suppose her story struck a chord with me. You know, reminding me of some of my own experiences running agents in Europe. I had one joe who skidded on a frozen road on his way to a dead-drop site and crashed his car.'

'Was he hurt?'

'No, no. He walked away and it turned out all right in the end, after one or two hairy moments. Mainly, though, I was interested in what she said about getting Golitsyn out of Finland.'

'Something similar happened to you?'

'Not exactly. But it could have. Imagining your agent getting caught with incriminating documents is what keeps a handler awake at night, if he lets it. And every agent has a limited shelf-life, so you're going to have to have a plan to exfiltrate him at some point.'

'You've got someone specific in mind, don't you? The same guy who crashed his car?'

'I heard you were smart. Yes, the same guy.'

'Where is he?'

'Let's just say, the wrong side of the Iron Curtain. Getting someone out of Finland is one thing; from over there, quite another.'

'Which are you worried about? That he won't have time to get out before they get onto him, or that the exfiltration – that's a great word, isn't it? – will go wrong?'

'Both.' He made a face. 'He's a good guy. He deserves to live out the rest of his life in peace and comfort in the West.'

'Family?'

'Yeah.'

'Are you still in touch?'

'No. It's not allowed.'

‘Do you think he’s in any danger from COSSACK? You know, of being exposed as an asset?’

Green puffed out his cheeks. ‘No,’ he said. ‘I don’t think so. Only a very few people on our side even know of his existence, let alone his identity. It’s him being denounced by his own people that I’m afraid of.’

They busied themselves with their drinks for a while.

O’Rourke shook her head. ‘Do you get it, Michael? I mean, do you understand how COSSACK, whoever he turns out to be, can betray his country’s secrets and sit comfortably while his actions send men to their deaths?’

‘I don’t know how comfortable he’ll be feeling,’ said Green. ‘I’m not sure agents ever *do* feel comfortable. They’re always looking over their shoulder, starting at shadows, trusting nobody.’

O’Rourke sat back in her chair. ‘You know, Michael, I’ve never thought about it like that. But still, my question stands: how can he betray his country and send men to their death?’

Green shrugged. ‘Look, as yet, we don’t know who it is. So, we can only guess at his motives. It might be as simple as money. Greed can be a powerful motivator. Or maybe he’s being blackmailed, you know, caught with his trousers down, maybe.’

‘Maybe. But it all seems so ... so sordid, so sleazy, somehow.’

‘Welcome to my world. But it might not be. Or not only that.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Well, thinking about the agents I’ve known, in most cases there’s been more to it than that. A belief that they’re helping to bring about world peace, or horror at the excesses of their system. That sort of thing.’

‘But any agents you run are helping us, the free world, to overcome the oppression of the Soviet empire. You can’t compare that with a traitor betraying our secrets to the KGB.’

‘No? For all we know, COSSACK might be absolutely convinced of the justice of the communist cause. Or, like Klaus Fuchs, fear that the West’s military superiority makes nuclear war more likely.’

‘And that justifies sending men to their death?’



‘In their eyes, quite probably. And don’t forget, our hands aren’t clean, either. After all, the Rosenbergs were tried and executed in New York thirty years ago, even though there were doubts about the convictions.’

‘Oh, come on Michael, you—’

Green stood up, smiling. ‘Sorry Mel, I need to go to the loo. I mean the john, don’t I?’

O’Rourke watched him as he made his way through the throng, weaving his way between tables and around drinkers standing near the bar. At one point, he had to dodge smartly away from a guy who stepped backwards into his path and O’Rourke thought she saw him wince in pain. When he returned, she asked him about it.

‘I used to have a cat in Philadelphia,’ she said, ‘called Dusty. She was a rescue and she had spent the best part of a year with the ASPCA having her pelvis reconstructed after being run over. Most of the time, you would never have known: she walked, ran and jumped just as athletically and gracefully as any other cat of her age. But occasionally, if you paid close attention, you could notice a certain awkwardness, a stiffness, in the way her left leg moved. It’s the same with you, Michael, only it’s your right side that’s affected, isn’t it?’

Green snorted. ‘I said you were smart. You’re right. Oddly enough, I got knocked down as well, only in my case, it was probably deliberate.’

‘Really? Where was this? Helsinki?’

‘No, behind the Curtain.’

‘I’d heard you had an adventure over there.’

‘Word gets around, I see.’

‘Well, DC’s a small town. What happened?’

‘I fractured my leg in several places. I was in hospital initially for four weeks, then flown back to London. Still have a pin in my leg.’

‘What did you mean, before, when you said it was probably deliberate?’

‘To be honest, Mel, I’m not exactly sure. I do have a recollection of headlights, of a black car looming in front of me. But it’s all a bit of a blur. Both the incident itself and what preceded the night in question. Something happened. I did something. Or I learned something. I was told something. Something important. It’s nagging at my mind. Well, it’ll come back to me, or it won’t.’

Green gestured at her empty glass. ‘One more?’

O'Rourke noticed he was looking at her intently. His eyes were hazel, but flecked with green; a highly seductive mix, she realised. Or perhaps she'd had more Jameson's than she should have. Either way, it was clearly time to go. She checked her watch.

'Shit. I'd better be getting home, Michael. Rain-check?'

He smiled. It was definitely a very nice smile. God, she really did need to go.

'Absolutely,' he said. 'See you Monday.'

## Chapter Thirteen

*Washington DC, May/June 1983*

Over the next few weeks, Green had plenty to keep him occupied. First of all, he had his work with KOJAK. He had been able to provide Constantin with a fake asset, a lieutenant commander in Navy Intelligence, who worked closely with his American counterparts. The Cousins had been let in on the plot, without being given Constantin's name. Green liaised with a laconic CIA agent named Harry MacNamee and was pleased to find he was not on RACETRACK's shortlist of COSSACK candidates. Most of the stuff fed to KOJAK was de-tailed technical data that would take the Reds a while to make sense of and would likely as not be redundant by the time they did. But to keep the pot sweet, they were also given some genuine gold dust, not too much, and nothing that would do irreparable harm to the West, but enough to make Constantin look good. In fact, his efforts were well received and his stock rose, so much so that Green was able to perceive a marked improvement in his product.

Secondly, Green, along with Gordon and O'Rourke, continued to extract every piece of information they could glean from the remaining twenty-nine personnel files as RACETRACK's painstaking work ground on. McCain, meanwhile, under the authority of Joseph Philips Baxter, tracked down and questioned former Soviet agents to see if they could provide any clues to COSSACK's identity. Those endeavours proved fruitless, none of the agents offering anything more than vague rumours about a mole in the upper echelons of the CIA.

Olsson, too, experienced some bumps in the road, as he put in train the process of acquiring bank records. Sometimes this was because of initially recalcitrant managers of financial institutions, sometimes because the subject of his search had complex financial arrangements. But, Green noted, for all his professed cynicism, Olsson was relentless, and working his way through financial records and documents was his forte. He called the others together to reveal his conclusions.

'Okay,' he said, 'there are several subjects who could be described as having money troubles. For example, there's Clifton Taverner, who's gone through a messy divorce and seems to have hired a worse lawyer than his ex-wife, who's taken him to the cleaners.'

'So, he's a prime suspect, then,' said McCain.

'I'm not so certain,' said O'Rourke. 'Sure, he looks as if he might be vulnerable to being recruited, but aren't we looking for someone who's actually spending more than they ought to?'

'Exactly,' said Gordon. 'Got any folks like that, Robert?'

'Yes,' said Olsson. 'Two stand out. Paul Joseph Bonardino and Mitchell Masterton. Both have recently bought a house in a tony part of Arlington and a flash new car to boot. A lot of money in both cases, in cash.'

'Let's not jump to conclusions,' said Gordon. 'Put them on the short list, but let's carry on.'

Eventually, even though it depended on a bit of guesswork in some cases, they agreed on a short-list of eleven. It included Masterton and Bonardino, but there were doubts about the latter's access to information about the assets. Gordon undertook to have a word with his boss, Bryant Walker.

'What's next, then?' O'Rourke asked.

'Stage four, Mel,' said Gordon. 'In-depth interviews.'

'Who's going to do them?' Green asked.

'Not you, I'm afraid,' said Gordon. 'I'm sorry, Michael, but you'll just have to observe. In case of any future prosecution, we can't allow the direct involvement of a foreign agent.'

'Fair enough,' Green said. 'I know I can't be involved, much as I'd like to be. I'm looking forward to watching you guys at work, though.'

'Good,' said Gordon. 'We don't want to make the subjects feel as if they're under the spotlight, so we also want to try to give the impression that it's not an interrogation, that we're asking them to draw on their experience to help us solve a problem.'

\*

The interviews took some time setting up. Green tried not to become impatient with the apparent mutual obstructiveness between the Agency and the Bureau. After all, he wouldn't have expected MI5 and the SIS to play nicely together in similar circumstances. Eventually, it was agreed they would be held at the CIA Washington Field Offices, but under FBI rules. From what Olsson had found out, Green hadn't really believed that Bonardino was their man, and so it proved. Bryant Walker had told Gordon, that first of all, his

access to the burned assets was limited, and second of all, he knew for a fact Bonardino's wife had inherited a small fortune from her late grandfather. That left Masterton as their prime suspect. Green had mixed feelings about this. True, he was unimpressed by what he knew of Masterton's professionalism and competence, and thoroughly disapproved of his attitude, but he actually quite liked the bloke.

There had been a debate about when to call in him in, Olsson wanting to schedule him at first bat. Green argued that to do so might just tip him the wink that this was something more than a routine information gathering session. O'Rourke agreed. After some humming and hawing, it was decided to follow alphabetic order, which put him on the schedule at number five. Gordon formulated a standard set of questions. The interviewers would be allowed to follow up on the answers they were given, but the set format would help maintain the narrative that nobody was being singled out, that it was an exercise designed to get a better understanding of how the assets got burned. Further to that end, the interviews weren't timetabled in a safe room but in an ordinary interview room.

Green, watching from the observation room, was impressed with the calm, methodical approach adopted by the interviewers, expertly marshalled by Gordon. But it was to little or no avail. As far as Green could see, nothing was elicited from the first four interviews that added up to firm evidence against any of the suspects. Of course, that might mean nothing more than that if one of them were COSSACK, he was too streetwise to let anything slip. But Green didn't think so; for what it was worth, his gut told him that all four were in the clear.

When it came to the turn of Mitchell Masterton, Green suggested to Gordon that she and O'Rourke should take the lead.

'No offence to Chester and Robert,' he said. 'It's just that I know this bloke, and I think that you two might get more out of him than they would. He underestimates women.'

'Good idea,' said Gordon. 'What's more, Michael, I think you should actually sit in on this one. Not with the rest of us, but in a corner, just in his line of sight. Let's disconcert him, just a little bit'.

O'Rourke looked up from reading Masterton's file. 'How the fuck has this guy gotten away with it, all these years?' she demanded. 'Look. Apart from the queries over his finances, there's poor timekeeping, slapdash security procedures, drunkenness, failure

after failure to run agents effectively, consistently poor appraisals, irregular polygraph tests.'

Gordon shrugged. 'In the eyes of the Agency, he hasn't gotten away with it. If his record was even half-decent, he'd be much further advanced in his career. Which is something I bet rankles with him. Maybe we can use that in the interview. Flatter his ego and see how far he's prepared to go to disparage his superiors.'

\*

Masterton was ten minutes late, but didn't seem to be flustered in any way. He hadn't bothered knocking before coming in and obviously didn't feel the need to apologise for his tardiness, simply settling himself down into the unoccupied chair and favouring them with a supercilious smile. His hair was a lot shorter than when Green had last seen him in Helsinki, and his moustache and sideboards were neatly clipped. He had on a pair of designer-wear glasses, a sharp blue Armani suit, and Italian soft leather loafers. A brilliant white shirt and navy-blue tie, embossed with a university emblem and held with a silver tiepin, completed the ensemble of a youngish professional going places.

The room was arranged in line with current management theory, with five low arm-chairs spaced around a circular coffee table in the centre of the room. Green sat on a chair several feet away in one corner. Gordon and O'Rourke were sitting quite close together, opposite where Masterton sat, with McCain and Olsson either side of them.

Gordon stood up, offering her hand, bringing Masterton back to his feet.

'I'm Catherine Gordon,' she said, going on to introduce her two male colleagues. Masterton acknowledged he had met McCain before. Gordon turning back to O'Rourke. 'And this is Mel—'

'Mel O'Rourke.' Masterton positively beamed. 'I rarely forget a face and I certainly couldn't forget one as pretty as hers, get what I'm saying? How are you, hon?'

Before O'Rourke could respond, Masterton had moved over towards Green, holding out his hand.

'And here's Michael Green,' he said, 'as I live and breathe. Hear you got banged up pretty good over there in Europe a while back. How're you doing?'

'Er,' Green stammered. 'Okay, I guess.'

Instead of shaking Green's hand, he clapped him on the shoulder. 'Good to hear. Listen. You still playing the old Najdorf variation? Take my advice. At move seven don't play queen to f3 but go with pawn to f4. It opens up a lot of options, get what I'm saying?'

He didn't wait for a reply, just clapping Green on the shoulder again, before returning to his seat, where he sat at his ease, legs crossed. He lit a cigarette and Gordon passed across an ashtray.

'Mr. Masterton,' began Gordon, 'I—'

'Mitch, please,' he insisted. 'We're all friends here, aren't we?'

'Of course,' said Gordon. 'Mitch it is. I just wanted to confirm the status of this interview. You're just one of a number of colleagues we're talking to.' She turned over a hand. 'As you know, er, Mitch, both the Agency and the FBI, and our British friends too, if it comes to that, have lost far too many assets in recent times. We need to find out the reasons why, and we're hoping to tap into the experience of old hands like yourself. Think you can help us out?'

'I surely hope so, Catherine.'

'Excellent. Michael is here purely as an observer. Okay?'

'Fine. Hands across the water, eh? No problem.'

'Good. Let's begin. Mel?'

'Thanks, Catherine. Mitch, the first thing we're asking everyone is, what are your thoughts about the reasons for the losses of all those assets?'

Masterton sat back in his chair, scratched his stomach and pursed his lips. 'Well ... that's the sixty-four-thousand-dollar question, isn't it? 'Probably not just one thing, I guess. You know, poor tradecraft, bad luck, that sort of thing.'

'Uh-huh. Nothing more specific?'

Masterton shrugged. 'Without knowing more of the details ...'

'Let's move on,' said Gordon. 'Mitch, you didn't mention the possibility of there being a mole at the Agency. Do you rule that out?'

Masterton appeared to give this some thought. 'I suppose anything's possible. But a mole in the CIA? Really? In the *Agency*? It's hard to believe, get what I'm saying?'

'I do,' said Gordon, 'but humour me. Imagine there is one. Hypothetically, obviously. How do you think the KGB would have recruited him?'

'Er, I'm not sure ...'

‘Come on, Mitch,’ O’Rourke said, ‘you’re an experienced counterintelligence officer—’

‘And you’ve run agents yourself,’ added Gordon. ‘Very successfully by all accounts.’

‘True enough.’

‘Then you must have given it some thought.’

‘Yeah, I guess. Look, first off, who approached whom. I mean, was this hypothetical mole actually recruited, or did he volunteer?’

‘You think he could have been a walk-in?’ asked O’Rourke.

Masterton shrugged. ‘I don’t think anything. You asked me a hypothetical question, I gave you a hypothetical answer.’

‘Which is more likely, in your view?’ asked Gordon.

Another shrug. ‘I couldn’t say. Sometimes you pitch an agent, promise him all kinds of things, appeal to his better self, whatever, all to no avail. Then, out of the blue, someone just walks into your embassy and offers you the Crown Jewels.’

He turned and winked at Green.

‘Fair enough,’ said Gordon. ‘But here in DC, the FBI keep a close eye on the Russian Embassy. If someone from the Agency so much as set foot in that building, there’d be a record of it, wouldn’t there?’

Masterton grinned. ‘Sure. But there are always reasons for getting in touch with the opposition. You should know that, Catherine.’

‘Such as?’ asked O’Rourke

‘Well, both sides try to pretend we aren’t actually intelligence officers, just government or embassy officials, so there could be legitimate business to conduct, maybe to do with diplomatic matters, or trade or, I don’t know, cultural stuff.’

‘In fact,’ said Gordon, ‘you’ve had contact with two or three Soviet officials, haven’t you?’

‘Yes, ma’am.’

‘Why was that?’

‘Well, officially I work for the State Department, so it would be perfectly natural for me to make contact with other “diplomats”.’

Masterton made quotation-mark gestures with his fingers.

‘Are you seriously suggesting these people don’t know you’re CIA?’ O’Rourke asked.



‘Sure they do.’ Masterton looked at O’Rourke as if she were an idiot. ‘But it’s in both our interests to pretend for a while, establish a relationship, even meet socially from time to time. Eventually you can try and pitch them, see if they’re recruitable.’

‘And,’ said O’Rourke, ‘I imagine they’d try and pitch you too, right?’

Masterton shook his head. ‘Never happened.’

‘Really?’

‘Yes, really.’

‘Okay,’ said Gordon. ‘I presume all contacts of that kind are recorded?’

For the first time, Masterton seemed less sure of himself.

‘Yeah, sure. Of course. ‘Cept, you know, not every time. Just when there’s something worth recording, I guess.’

Green thought Gordon’s body language suggested she was itching to follow up on Masterton’s admission. She resisted the temptation, moving on to the next topic.

‘What about motivation, Mitch?’ she asked. ‘What do you think would make someone turn traitor?’

‘Traitor! That’s some strong language you’re using there, Catherine.’

‘Really? What else would you call someone who betrays his country by giving away secrets to the enemy? Betrayal of trust on that scale can only be called treason, can’t it?’

Masterton seemed to be undergoing some kind of internal struggle, as if he was deciding whether or not to speak his mind.

‘Put like that,’ he said, ‘I suppose you’re right. But that’s what spying involves, doesn’t it? Betrayal of trust.’

‘Go on,’ said Gordon.

‘Well, say you’ve got a cultural attaché, an Agency guy. He makes eyes at a counterpart in the SB in Warsaw or the StB in Prague. They become buddies. Go fishing. Visit the opera.’ He half-turned towards Green, again. ‘Play a few games of chess. So, there’s friendship there. A relationship of trust. But at least one of them is going to try to recruit the other. He’s going to betray the other guy’s trust. I’m not saying it’s wrong. It is what it is. Betraying people’s trust is what intelligence officers do.’

He lit another cigarette, recrossed his legs and sat back in his chair, clearly pleased with himself.

‘That’s an interesting point of view, Mitch,’ said Gordon. ‘Can we go back a bit, though? I was asking you what you think makes someone do it, I mean give away their country’s secrets.’

‘So you were. I suppose, unless there’s some blackmail involved, it comes down to one of two things: politics or money.’

‘Politics?’ said O’Rourke.

‘Yeah, like those British fags. Commies, weren’t they?’

‘You mean Burgess and Maclean?’ said O’Rourke.

‘And Philby, too.’

‘He wasn’t gay.’

‘No? You say so. Anyway, that ideological stuff’s not really the American way, is it? Getting all hung up on the class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat.’

‘Oh?’ said Gordon. ‘Didn’t Joe McCarthy once say there were more than a hundred communists in the CIA?’

Masterton laughed, a genuine belly-laugh. ‘Come on, Catherine. That was complete bullshit and you know it. And it was thirty years ago.’

‘Even so,’ said Gordon. ‘Are you one hundred per cent certain there are no communist sympathisers anywhere in the Agency?’

‘Well, no. I guess not. But I haven’t come across any.’

‘Fair enough,’ said Gordon, ‘neither have I. But I have heard officers questioning the Agency’s role in the Cold War, you know, stuff about it all being a put-up job to keep us in work and justify the arms race.’

‘Aw, that’s just trash-talk. You’ll never stop that going on.’

‘Nothing to it then?’

‘I wouldn’t say that. I mean, someone’ll say the Reds aren’t really that big a threat, or that the two sides are much of a muchness, really. I’ve even heard guys saying that our spies spy on their spies, and nothing worthwhile comes from it.’

‘But you don’t believe that, do you?’ O’Rourke asked.

She got the full benefit of Masterton’s best smile.

‘Just telling you what I’ve heard, hon. Mind you, we all know that our side is a hell of a lot stronger than theirs, get what I’m saying? My advice, though? As Deep Throat said, “Follow the money”.’

'You mean—' O'Rourke began, but Masterton sailed on.

'Look at Boyce and Lee, for example,' he said. 'Gambling debts, wasn't it?' He turned towards Green once more. 'Not a popular comedy duo, Michael, but a pair of spies who sold satellite intel to the Reds.'

'I know who they are,' Green said. 'But they weren't CIA, were they? They worked for contractors ...' Gordon had turned to look at him. He raised a hand. 'Sorry, Catherine.'

Gordon waved his apology away. 'Still, Mitch,' she said, 'it would never be a problem in your case, would it?'

'Not sure I'm following you there, Catherine.'

'I mean, no-one would suspect you of selling secrets for money, would they? I understand you're pretty well fixed on that score. Isn't that so?'

Masterton smiled, but from Green's perspective, it looked false, certainly not a smile of self-satisfaction.

'Uh. Yeah. Well. You know. Rosie's family had a few bucks. Her favourite uncle left her a bundle. Get what I'm saying?'

Olsson stirred, but Gordon appeared to take no notice.

'Sure,' she said. 'Mazel tov. Anyway, let's move on, shall we? Mel?'

'Just one more question.' O'Rourke shuffled the papers in front of her. 'Mitch, you said earlier there were two things that might persuade someone to become a mole, namely money and politics. Isn't there another: ego?'

'Not sure I get you, Mel.'

'You know what I mean. There must be employees who believe their talents aren't recognised, that others have been given promotions that should have gone to them. No?'

Once again, Masterton appeared to be struggling with himself about how to answer that.

'Come on, Mitch. We all know people who get promoted above their ability. Who end up bossing around subordinates who have ten times as much talent. Am I right?'

Masterton laughed. 'Sure you are. Twenty times, sometimes.'

'Are you talking about yourself here, Mitch?' O'Rourke asked.

'Me?' He gave her his best smile. 'I wouldn't say that. Anyway, that's just the way it is.'

'But,' O'Rourke persisted, 'that would piss some people off, wouldn't it?'

'No doubt. But me? I just roll with the punches. Get what I'm saying?'

After Masterton had gone, the five of them sat around for what Olsson insisted on calling the 'post-game analysis'. He was critical of the interview, maintaining that Gordon and O'Rourke should have gone in harder. There was some pushback on that, but all agreed they hadn't nailed Masterton as COSSACK. They hadn't got much further, when an admin assistant popped her head round the door to tell Gordon that there was a phone call for her. It wasn't long before she returned.

'That was Martin Beckenhof, Deputy Director of the Office of Security,' she said. 'He's arranged tomorrow to bring with him from Langley an intelligence officer from the Soviet/East Europe Division, name of Edward Duane Carlson, known as "Dewey". Mel, Chester, you'll be interviewing him. Michael, you can sit in.'

'Why?' asked Chester. 'What's his story?'

'His story, as you put it,' said Gordon, 'is that he knows who the mole is.'

## Chapter Fourteen

*Washington DC-London-Prague-Berlin, June 1983*

In the end, Green did not get to sit in on the interview with Dewey. Two phone calls put an end to that possibility. The first came through the night of the interview with Master-ton. Green was in bed asleep, dreaming about something that seemed vitally important, but that instantly disappeared from his consciousness, when he was shaken awake by the loud buzzing of the alarm. He clicked on the clock light: it was only 3.23. The buzzing continued. It was the phone.

'Hello?'

'Mr Green?'

'Yes.'

'This is Symonds from the Embassy. I'm sorry to disturb you. I thought you'd want to know straightaway that your Uncle Theo has had to leave the country immediately. A family emergency, I believe. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news.'

'I see. Thank you, Symonds.'

Green put the phone down and sat back in bed, wide awake, now. He had a terrible feeling in the pit of his stomach. Of course, he didn't have an Uncle Theo. That was the first name of the TV character, Kojak. It was Oleg all over again. Constantin had been burned and was no doubt on his way back to Moscow. Interrogation, torture, and a bullet in the back of the head would be his fate. He got up and went to the bathroom, just making it before he threw up the remains of his previous night's dinner.

The second call came through first thing in the morning while he was meeting his boss, the head of Washington Station, Adrian Shawcross. Green had found him extracting his golf clubs from a cupboard in the corner of his office. Shawcross saw the querying look on Green's face.

'Not playing hookey, Michael. Bit of fraternisation with the enemy.' Shawcross must have detected a look of shock on Green's face. He laughed. 'No, no, not the opposition. Nine holes with a bigwig from the Agency. Getting to know the lie of the land, d'you see?'

Shawcross was a new boy, too, having only taken up his post a week before Green arrived. He confirmed that KOJAK had indeed been lifted and that his execution was a foregone conclusion. Green was fully expecting a bollocking, or at least some supercilious

comment along the lines of, 'to lose one agent ...' In fact, Shawcross waved it off, airily declaring, 'These things happen, old boy'.

They were discussing the possibilities of how KOJAK had been unmasked, when the call came through. Green was to catch the first available flight to London, and report immediately to Matthew Waddington.

On the flight over, Green revisited the discussion he'd begun with Shawcross. Constantin's fate inevitably weighed heavily on his shoulders. How had he been 'compromised', to use the term in common parlance, though Green understood O'Rourke's almost visceral dislike of it? Of course, Constantin might just have been careless in his tradecraft. Perhaps he had been followed to a dead-drop and then been caught in the act. It was possible. But now two agents run by him had suffered the ultimate penalty for working on behalf of the West. Was Green somehow the common denominator? He hated to think so. But he couldn't escape the fact that Constantin had been operating as an agent for some time before his arrival, then, all of a sudden, he got burned. Green racked his brains trying to think of anything he'd might have done that could have led to his demise, second-guessing all the little actions he'd taken and conversations he'd had at the embassy. On the other hand, the possibility still existed that Constantin had been another victim of the mole in the CIA. After all, his product had been shared with the Cousins. Of course, Green hoped it was true, as it more or less absolved both Constantin and him of blame. The problem was, that if Masterton, or someone else, was the mole, how had he known KOJAK's identity? Moreover, it would mean that the mole was very much still active, which in turn meant that other assets were potentially at risk. It was vital that COSSACK be unmasked.

\*

London in June was hot and humid. The tube was nigh-on unbearable. The newspapers were still full of the repercussions of Margaret Thatcher's landslide election victory, though there was a new James Bond film – *Octopussy* – to distract the public.

George Bainbridge was still on duty at Century House. After the usual pleasantries, George sent Green up to the tenth floor. Matthew Waddington's secretary, Lydia, greeted him warmly, asking him about the flight, his injuries, and the weather in Washington. After about ten minutes, she showed him in to Waddington's office. It was only a year or so since he'd last seen Waddington, but seeing him sitting behind his desk, it seemed to

Green time was beginning to catch up with him. Thinning hair, spreading waistline – the double whammy of middle age. After a brief bout of catching-up, Green's former boss got down to business.

'I've got a job for you, Michael. It's to do with PELICAN.'

Green had had no contact with Pavel Souček since he'd been run down in Prague, and as was the way in the SIS, the Chinese Walls erected between the different parts of the service meant he'd been given no information about him, either. Officially, at any rate.

'I'd guessed as much,' Green said. 'What's the score?'

'Since the incident in Prague, he's been run by your replacement in Helsinki, Derek Stockton, aided on the ground by Gerry McSprague. Although, truth be told, there's been a drop off in his product since you were attacked. Not in quality, but definitely in quantity.'

'Do you know why?'

Waddington turned over a palm. 'Well, for one thing, I think he prized his relationship with you. He trusted you, that's for sure. I don't think he's ever felt the same about Derek. On top of that, I reckon he's been finding it tough going. You know the pressure agents are under, constantly looking over their shoulder. And he's not getting any younger.'

Green raised an eyebrow.

'Yeah, well,' said Waddington. 'He's not the only one.'

'But do you think PELICAN is worried about getting caught? I mean, more than usual?'

'Yes. Very much so. That's why you're here. He left a note in a dead-drop saying he believes he's about to be found out.'

'Is he?'

'No way of knowing. Doesn't really matter much, though, does it?'

'True. But I know PELICAN. He's not one to cry wolf.'

'I'm sure you're right. Anyway, we're pulling him out. He deserves it. Thing is, Michael, he's asked specifically for you, for "Maurice".'

So, it was to be an exfiltration. From the moment you recruited an agent, you planned for exactly this day. The problem was, he'd been off the scene for so long.

'Okay,' Green said. 'Can I assume that there's a plan in place?'

'Not exactly,' said Waddington. 'You'll need to talk it through with the team in Prague.'

\*

For Green, visiting Prague in late spring, this time under his own name, with diplomatic cover, was no hardship. The weather was warm and dry, the fruit trees on Petřín hill were still in bloom, and even in a drab communist country the girls were beginning to parade in short summer dresses. He was booked into the Sax Hotel, a small, family run business not far from the British Embassy on Thunovska. His room was small, but neat and comfortable, and there was a view from the window of red rooftops, and the spires and turrets of Prague Castle. He assumed, as a matter of course, that the room was bugged, but wasted no effort searching for devices. He had no intention of carrying out any conversations in that room that he wouldn't want overheard. Equally, he assumed it would be searched the minute he stepped out, so didn't bother leaving any traps to confirm such an incursion.

Nor did Green bother with any countersurveillance measures, when, having checked in, he set off for Thunovska. What could be more natural than a diplomat visiting his embassy? Gerry McSprague was waiting for him and escorted him to the sound-proofed, bug-proof room in the basement. McSprague was a few years younger than him, a lanky redhead from Derry who gave the impression of a mild-mannered secondary-school teacher, but was actually a martial arts expert and a crack shot. Action, rather than analysis, was his forte; just the sort of man needed for street work. They settled into what were actually quite uncomfortable chairs around the small table, getting down to business after some initial pleasantries. McSprague opened a ring-binder he'd laid on the table.

'PELICAN left this note in a dead drop, a few days ago.' There was only the faintest trace of a Northern Irish brogue. He riffled through the clear plastic wallets in the ring-binder, until he found the one he wanted, unclipped it from the binder and passed it across the table.

Inside the wallet was a handwritten note, in Czech, with a typed English translation underneath:

At meeting today with senior Czech army officers, very tense atmosphere. General Miklosko announced there had been a leak, an act of treason. Someone was giving classified information to the enemy. I was not directly accused, but I believe it is only matter of time before I am discovered. If that happens, I have no doubt I will be executed. My family and I must leave Czechoslovakia as soon as possible. Send



for Maurice. You must tell him to come where we usually meet. Next Monday, 19.00.

Green passed the note back to McSprague. He clipped it back into the ring-binder, then tried to relax in his chair, but squirmed a little as he attempted without success to make himself comfortable.

'Have you replied?' Green asked.

'Yes. We've agreed to his request. You remember where he means, I take it?'

'I do.'

\*

After the usual labyrinthine counter-surveillance measures, Green turned into Šrobárova on the following Monday with about five minutes to spare. When Ladislav Rosicky opened the door, after a routine scan up and down the road, he wrapped Green in an embrace and ushered him inside. The restaurant in the basement was as usual closed for Monday and once again Pavel Souček was sitting alone at a corner table, drinking coffee and smoking Marlboros. There was a chess game set up, but none of the pieces had been moved. He was dressed casually, in an open-neck collarless shirt, and corduroy trousers. He rose to embrace Green, then held him at arms' length, looking him up and down.

'It is good to see you, Morits,' he said in Russian. 'You are looking well, remarkably so.'

'It's good to see you, too, Pavel. You too are looking well.'

This wasn't entirely true. Souček still looked slim and fit, but, just like Matthew Waddington, he had definitely aged in the months since they'd first met: more grey in his hair, deeper worry-lines on his face.

They sat, and Rosicky poured coffee for Green and topped up Souček, before bowing slightly and leaving them to it.

'I am very tired, Morits, and this business with General Miklosko is the last straw. I'm convinced it is only a matter of time before I am exposed. We must get out. My family and I must get out. Soon.'

'I agree. And we'll get you out just as soon as we can.'

Souček visibly relaxed. 'Thank you, Morits. I cannot tell you how glad I am to hear this.'

'Of course,' Green said, 'we'll need to know exactly who it is who will be accompanying you.'

Souček smiled. 'I must tell you, Morits, I do not yet know. Not even my wife, Lenka, knows of my double life, though possibly she suspects. Now that I know that the British will help us, I will immediately talk to my family.'

Green got up to go, but then a thought occurred. 'Tell me, Pavel, do you think you were betrayed? Perhaps by COSSACK?'

Souček stood up too, and stroked his chin contemplatively. 'I do not think so. If that were the case, surely I would have been arrested by now?'

'Perhaps. But with someone as important as you, they might want corroboration. Anyway, it's obvious we need to get you out fast.'

Green reached out a hand, but Souček grabbed his arm and pulled him in for another embrace. Rosicky showed him out, and he made his meandering way back to the embassy.

\*

It was a small group that assembled in the embassy safe room to co-ordinate Souček's ex-filtration; apart from Green, there was only Tom and Jerry – Cowdrey and McSprague. It was Cowdrey who had retrieved Souček's latest note, this time written in Russian, from a dead-drop site:

I told my wife today that I have been giving information against the USSR to the British. She said she was proud of me and trusted me to do the right thing. She is ready to leave at once. My daughter Jana cried, but with happiness that we would soon be free in the West. I was worried that my son, Zdeněk, would not wish to leave as he was making a new life with his girlfriend, Marta. But he embraced me, and told me the family must stay together. So, you can see, we are five. I must beg you to act fast. I do not have much time left.

Green looked at his two colleagues. 'You've both read this, I take it?'

'We have,' said McSprague. 'Five is not so easy, is it? 'Logistically, I mean.'

'No,' Green said, 'if it were just PELICAN, we might conceivably put him on a commercial flight, under diplomatic cover, though that would carry a risk if he were recognised. But we knew he'd want to get his family out with him. Let's make sure we've got the right plan in place to get it done.'

'Okay. What route do you have in mind?'

Green spread out a map of Czechoslovakia and its neighbours on the table. He traced a route with his finger.

‘The obvious route,’ he said, ‘is south through České Budějovice and across the border into Austria ...’ He paused, studying the map and moving his hand across it. ‘Or maybe west through Karlovy Vary and on into West Germany would be just as good. Either way, it would mean just one border crossing into a friendly country.’

‘True,’ said McSprague. ‘But there is an alternative.’ He took charge of the map. ‘Here,’ he said, ‘stabbing a finger at it. ‘There’s a route north, crossing the border at Teplice and driving on through East Germany to West Berlin.’

‘But that means driving through two Warsaw Pact countries,’ objected Green.

McSprague nodded. ‘It does,’ he said. ‘But there’s no guarantee that if we got him into Austria or West Germany that the Reds would respect the border. They’re still perfectly capable of sending a snatch squad and hang the consequences.’

Green was thinking about this when Cowdrey chipped in.

‘You see, there’s another thing,’ he said. ‘We make a regular late-night run in a van taking larger packages from the embassy to the military post office in West Berlin. In fact, Gerry’s done the run himself a few times.’

‘That’s right,’ said McSprague. ‘I thought it would be a good idea, you know, just in case.’

Green took a few moments to run over the pros and cons in his mind.’

‘Fair enough,’ he said. ‘North through Teplice it is.’

The three men talked through the arrangements, testing for weaknesses, building in contingencies, until they were satisfied they’d done all they could. They agreed they would do nothing out of the ordinary for the next few days, sticking to their normal routine as far as possible. Green sent an encrypted message to London outlining their plans and otherwise pretty much kept to the embassy, going over the exfiltration plans in his mind again and again, but also taking the practical steps necessary to put in place the arrangements for once they reached West Berlin, assuming they did. Both McSprague and Cowdrey had reported that they continued to be under surveillance by the StB and that had to be factored in to any attempts to bring the family into the embassy. As far as Green was concerned, at all costs, Souček and his family must not be seen entering the embassy; in that case, whatever the diplomatic niceties, the StB would surround the compound and there would be a standoff. Nor, he realised, could attempts to bring them in go on indefinitely. Hence, he decided that five days – Wednesday to Sunday – should be

set aside, with different pick-up points in each case, after which, if all else failed, Souček and his family would have to try to get out of the country under their own steam. To cover that contingency, Green undertook another practical task, namely putting together 'exfil packages' – overnight bags containing currency (Czech crowns, German marks and US dollars), false documents and rudimentary disguises.

The first three attempts to collect Souček and his family proved abortive. On each occasion, both McSprague and Cowdrey detected surveillance as they embarked on practice runs. So, they decided on a change of plan. They agreed that on the Saturday Green would borrow Rosicky's Volvo estate car. Green was worried about the risk to Souček's brother-in-law, but it was one he was prepared to take. The proposed pick-up point was Havlíčkovy Sady, Prague's second largest park. McSprague and Cowdrey set off from the embassy at nine o'clock in the evening, separately, going nowhere in particular, hoping to drag any surveillance away with them. At the same time, Green slipped out of the embassy and made his way to the Strahov athletics stadium car park, where Rosicky had left the Volvo, keys in the wheel arch. Crossing the Jiráskův most, he thought he'd picked up a tail, but once he'd left the bridge over the Vltava, the Fiat behind him turned left down Rašínovo as he went straight on along Resselova. Havlíčkovy Sady was a good choice from Green's point of view, as he was able to make use of the maze of backstreets sandwiched in the triangle between Legerova and Francouska. By the time he reached the designated park entrance on Perucká, Green was as sure as he could be that he was clean. However, there was no sign of Souček and his family, either. This left Green in a quandary. He didn't want to sit there for long, lights on, engine running, calling attention to himself; on the other hand, if they came along, the car needed to be visible. He needn't have worried. They must have been there all the time, checking to make sure he really hadn't been followed. The five of them slipped out of the shadows, and Souček, recognising him, raised a hand in greeting. Green got out of the car and ushered them into the back of the Volvo, on the floor, covered by blankets and raincoats. All bar Marta, who sat up front with him. What could be more natural than a man and a woman going for a spin on a summer's evening? At any rate, they made it to the embassy without incident.

It was normal for the post van to leave at eleven o'clock at night, so that was the time agreed on for the run to West Berlin. It was also normal for the driver to be accompanied by an assistant, to help load and unload the packages. McSprague was going to drive. Not

only had he done the run before, he spoke Russian, Czech and German fluently. Green was going along as the assistant. There was time before they left to visit two issues that had proved bones of contention when they laid out the plan to Souček. Firstly, he balked at the idea that he and his family needed to travel in large packing cases, but Green insisted. Yes, the van had diplomatic plates, so in theory was immune from a search, but sometimes the security forces acted first and apologised later, if necessary. It was possible that the border guards would try to have a look in the back of the van, but highly unlikely that they would actually go as far as to open the boxes. Secondly, understandably, Souček was concerned about the route that would take them through both Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. However, Green and his team eventually persuaded him that undertaking the routine journey delivering the post from Prague to West Berlin provided the best chance that the border guards would respect the diplomatic plates. There was one other matter to deal with, which their passengers didn't need to know about. Green badgered McSprague into finding him a gun. Before they left, he handed over a CZ75 9mm pistol, a Czech-made gun that had become popular with their security forces. When Green asked him where he'd got it, McSprague smiled, then tapped the side of his nose. Green shrugged and stuck the gun in a shoulder holster that would be covered by his jacket.

The drive, no more than sixty-five miles or so, through Teplice to the East German border was uneventful. McSprague had expressed happy surprise that the old post van had been replaced by something newer, and no doubt faster, and Green suspected Souček and family would also be grateful for the better suspension. McSprague didn't recognise the guards at the border but he still didn't expect any problems.

But he was wrong. A guard stepped out of the gatehouse, running his finger down a clipboard. Frowning, he waved them over to a parking area in front of the barbed wire fence by the side of the barrier. Two more guards came out, also carrying assault rifles, which Green assumed were Russian AK-47s, but which McSprague told him were Czech-made vz.58s. As far as Green could see, there was one more guard still inside. McSprague jumped out of the van and began to remonstrate with them, presumably emphasising their diplomatic status and demanding free passage. There was a lot of shaking of heads and pointing at the van in response. One of the guards made his way round to Green's side of the van, where he stopped to stare at him – menacingly, he thought – before

continuing round to the back of the van, where he began gesticulating, as if he wanted McSprague to open it up. Green quietly pulled out his pistol, racked a shell into the chamber, slipped off the safety catch, and held the gun down between his seat and the door. He couldn't let them capture Pavel Souček. Losing Oleg and Constantin was enough. But what was he going to do, shoot all four guards? Perhaps, if they insisted in opening the back, they would shy away from actually searching the boxes and packing cases inside. The fact there was nobody visibly hiding there might be enough. By now, McSprague was shouting and waving his hands about. Eventually, the guard who seemed to be in charge beckoned over his comrade from the back of the van and sent him into the gatehouse. Green realised he'd been holding his breath, and let it out in a rush. McSprague made a gesture to him, imitating using the telephone. Green wound down the window.

'What's up?' He asked. 'Why the holdup?'

'You wouldn't fucking believe it,' McSprague said. 'Apparently, this van is so new that the licence number isn't on their authorised list.'

'Shit. So, what's happening?'

'I managed to persuade them to ring HQ and see if they've got the up-to-date schedule.'

'Will that work?'

'Let's bloody hope so.'

McSprague remained outside, leaning on the van smoking a cigarette. Green sat stewing in his seat. What were they going to do if the Czechs wouldn't let them through? Just turn round and go home? The downside of choosing this route was that even if they crashed through the border posts, they'd still be in hostile territory in East Germany. The minutes ticked by, slowly. McSprague lit another cigarette. Green wondered what was going through the minds of Souček and his family, literally and metaphorically in the dark in the packing cases in the back of the van. Then, after what seemed like an age, but was actually barely half an hour, Green could hear the phone ringing. The senior guard poked his head out of the gatehouse window, stuck his thumb up and shouted to McSprague, who got back in the driver's seat just as the barrier was lifted. One of the guards waved to their counterparts on the other side of the border, and Green could see across the twenty-five yards or so of no-man's land one of them raise a hand in acknowledgement.

The barrier was up on the East German side, and then they were off, heading for the A13 at Dresden and the one-hundred-and-thirty-mile drive to West Berlin. McSprague insisted on driving all the way, pumped as he was with adrenaline from the confrontation at the border. It turned out to be an easy drive, there being virtually no traffic on the motorway at that time of night, although they did pass a long military convoy heading south. By four o'clock in the morning, they had reached the outskirts of Berlin, and ploughed westwards towards the checkpoint at Nikolassee, called GÜSt Drewist by the Germans, and Checkpoint Bravo by the Allies. After their experience at the Czech border, Green viewed the barriers with some trepidation, but this time McSprague did recognise some of the guards and he was soon out of the cab, sharing a joke and his cigarettes with them. Then they were through, crossing into the American Sector of West Berlin. The Americans watched them go past but seeing the van's plates did not detain them, and they were onto the Avus, the A115 motorway that would take them into the British Sector and on to Charlottenburg where the British Military Government had its HQ in a compound at the Olympic Stadium.

All in all, Souček and his family had been cooped up for six hours, and roomy though the packing cases were, they were overjoyed to be able to stretch their legs, use the restrooms and enjoy the feeling of freedom. Green, Souček and the family were escorted to their quarters by a courteous infantry lieutenant who informed them that, given the lateness of the hour, they wouldn't be expected in the mess before midday. They would be leaving for the next stage of the journey at 14.30 hours. Once the lieutenant had left them at the doors to their rooms and said his goodnights, Souček paused with his hand on the doorhandle and turned towards Green.

'Morits, what *is* the next stage of our journey?'

'Oh! Didn't I tell you?' Green said. 'Tomorrow afternoon you'll have to get back into your packing cases and be loaded onto the "Berliner" train that leaves Charlottenburg station and chugs through Potsdam, Brandenburg, Magdeberg and Marienborn in the DDR, before crossing the border and terminating at Braunschweig. It only takes about four hours. Interestingly, though the carriages are British, the locomotive is East German, at least until we reach Helmstadt, where—'

'Morits! You cannot seriously expect us to get back in those damned cases again. It is impossible! Surely, we could put on British Army uniforms, or —'

All of a sudden, he stopped and began to smile, then broke out into a proper belly-laugh.

‘Ah, Morits, Morits,’ he said wiping a tear from his eye. ‘I think you are joking with me. Very good.’

Green was sure he’d kept his best poker face on, but maybe McSprague had given the game away.

‘Sorry, Pavel,’ Green said. ‘I couldn’t resist it. No, we’re not going by train, fun though that sounds. I’m told there’s an excellent dining car. Instead, tomorrow afternoon – I mean *this* afternoon, don’t I? – we’ll take a short drive to RAF Gatow and board a military aircraft to RAF Northolt, just outside London. How does that sound?’

‘Much better, my friend. Much better.’

That afternoon they all assembled outside the main building to await the jeep that would take them down the Potsdamer Chausee to the airfield, where they were to be escorted onto a Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport plane. Souček took Green by the arm and drew him away from the group. Souček turned, placing his hands on Green’s shoulders, so that he could look him in the eyes.

‘Truly, Mikhail,’ Souček said, ‘we will never be able to repay you for what you have done for us.’

Green stood there open-mouthed for a moment. ‘You, you ... you know my name. How, er—’

‘Come now, my friend. Did you really believe someone in my position would not have the resources to find out something so easy? But you preferred to use your codename. Why should I have interfered?’

Green smiled, ruefully, and shook his head. ‘I suppose I should have known.’

Souček grinned. ‘Perhaps you should.’ Becoming serious, he put his hand on Green’s arm. ‘Tell me, Mikhail, have you caught the mole? What I told you helped, yes?’

Green must have looked nonplussed. Souček gripped his arm, more firmly. ‘That the mole, COSSACK, was having an affair with a Latin-American woman? You remember.’

He hadn’t remembered. This was what had been nagging away at him ever since he had been knocked down in Prague. The trauma of the incident had driven it from the front of his mind. But it all made sense, now. It couldn’t be a coincidence. Mitchell Masterton just had to be COSSACK.



## Chapter Fifteen

*Washington DC, June 1983*

While Green was dealing with the exfiltration of PELICAN in Prague, McCain and O'Rourke had interviewed Carlson, aka Dewey. In the end, his story had not proved quite so dramatic as it had first been reported. Beckenhof arrived, bringing with him not just Carlson, but the latter's boss, Benton Adams. He showed no sign of remembering the two FBI agents, which O'Rourke thought was pretty much par for the course. Carlson waited outside, while Adams filled them in. He told them that Carlson had reported to him that a KGB source he'd recruited had come to him with information about a mole inside the Agency. The source, codename SEABISCUIT, had said that the CIA had been penetrated in the late nineteen-sixties by one of its own officers, born in the United States but with one set of grandparents from Ukraine. He wouldn't be immediately identifiable, because his parents had anglicised their name. He'd been a sleeper, not activated straightaway, but he was to become the mole responsible for the loss of so many assets in the last few years. Adams had reported all this to Beckenhof. O'Rourke asked him about Carlson.

'Good man,' said Adams. 'A bit wet behind the ears, if you know what I mean. But pretty sound I'd say.'

'And his asset?' O'Rourke asked. 'What do you make of him?'

'SEABISCUIT? I understand he's a typical KGB plant, masquerading as an undersecretary at the embassy.'

'You know his name?'

'I do not. Need to know and all that.'

'Okay. But do you trust his intel? Do you believe that he really has identified a mole in the Agency?'

Adams shrugged. 'Well, that's why you two are here, isn't it?'

Adams and Beckenhof vacated the room, ushering Carlson in. The interview room had grown a lot warmer, the air-conditioning working only fitfully. McCain and O'Rourke took off their jackets and McCain loosened his tie, gesturing to Carlson to do the same. He complied, gratefully. Carlson was thirty-seven or so, clean-shaven, with a mop of dark-brown hair parted in the middle, and wire-frame glasses which did not disguise the fact that his hazel eyes were darting around, nervously. Interesting, thought O'Rourke. Why

should he be nervous? If SEABISCUIT really could identify the mole in the CIA, it'd be a huge feather in his cap.

The agents introduced themselves, explaining to him that as it would be the FBI who would investigate and arrest the mole, that was why they were interviewing him. McCain poured them all a glass of water.

'Is it okay if we call you Dewey?' McCain asked. 'I hear that's how you like to be known.'

'Sure thing,' he said.

'Good. And you should call us Chester and Mel.'

He nodded.

'Right,' said McCain, 'tell me about your asset, SEABISCUIT. What's his name?'

'Um. I'm not sure I should be sharing that. Even Mr Adams doesn't know that. No offence.'

'Fair enough. How did you recruit him?'

'I didn't have to. He approached me.'

'Really?' O'Rourke said. 'That was a stroke of luck. Where did it happen?'

'In a bar. Near the embassy.'

McCain and O'Rourke exchanged glances. Was this going to be like pulling teeth?

'Oh, yes?' said O'Rourke. 'Which bar was that, then?'

'The 15<sup>th</sup> Street Lounge on McPherson Square.'

'I know it,' said McCain. 'Opposite a McDonald's, isn't it?'

'If you say so.'

'What were you doing there?' asked O'Rourke. 'I see from your file you live in an apartment up near Meridian Hill Park.'

'I was meeting an old friend from university days. Hadn't seen him for years.'

'So, what happened?' asked McCain. 'SEABISCUIT just wandered over to your table while you and your buddy were chewing over old times, and introduced himself? "Hi guys, I'm your friendly local KGB officer"?''

'No, of course not. In fact, he waited until I went to the head and followed me in. He didn't speak to me then, just gave me an envelope.'

'How did he know who you were, that you're in the Agency?' insisted McCain. 'You weren't wearing a trench coat and a fedora, by any chance?'

‘No. He told me later that KGB officers have sheets of photographs of everyone who works in the Division. He recognised me from that.’

‘Ah, I see.’ Said McCain. He turned towards O’Rourke. ‘Who says coincidences never happen, eh?’ He turned back towards Carlson. ‘And what was in the envelope?’

‘Just a date, time and meeting place.’

They waited. It *was* like pulling teeth. ‘Where did you meet?’ O’Rourke asked.

‘By the tiger cage at Woodley Park Zoo. It was Tuesday evening.’

‘And is that when he told you about the mole?’

‘Yes. I think he wanted to establish his bona fides.’

‘Right. Tell us exactly what he said.’

‘It’s what I told Mr Adams.’

‘Tell us.’

‘Well, I don’t know I can remember exactly.’

‘Do your best.’

Carlson shrugged. ‘He said there was a mole in the CIA. Ukrainian heritage. Responsible for the loss of assets.’

‘That’s it?’ said McCain.

‘Yes.’

‘How many assets?’ O’Rourke said.

‘He didn’t say.’

‘What position does the mole hold in the Agency?’

‘He didn’t say that either.’

‘Have you arranged to meet him again?’

‘Yes. Three weeks from the first meeting. Same time and place.’

Carlson had little more to add, so they let him go and went off to report back to Adams. Beckenhof had gone back to Langley.

‘Well?’ Adams said. ‘What did you make of him?’

‘I have to say,’ McCain said. ‘He wasn’t very convincing. He seemed pretty nervous.’

‘That might have been because he was being interrogated by two fearsome FBI agents with his boss waiting outside!’ O’Rourke said.

‘Yeah,’ said Adams, ‘there’s that. Anything concrete?’

'There is,' said McCain. 'First of all, he didn't disagree with me that the bar he met his asset in was opposite a McDonald's. It isn't.'

'Come on, Chester,' O'Rourke said, 'that's hardly decisive. He may only have been there the once.'

'Maybe, but there's the rest of it. Too many coincidences and improbabilities. I mean, SEABISCUIT just happened to be in the same bar; he immediately recognised a relatively minor intelligence officer; he showed his best playing card from the beginning; and there seems to have been virtually no discernible tradecraft by a so-called experienced KGB officer. Need I go on?'

O'Rourke shook her head.

'I feared as much,' said Adams.'

'Why would he do it?' asked McCain. 'Any idea?'

Adams shrugged. 'Perhaps you put your finger on it. Maybe he was fed up with being a relatively minor intelligence officer.'

'What'll happen now?' I asked.

'Let's wait and see if SEABISCUIT makes it to the next meeting,' said Adams. 'We'll take it from there.'

McCain and O'Rourke started to stand up to go, but Adams waved them back to their seats.

'How did the interview go with Mitch Masterton?' he asked.

'Not really for us to say,' said McCain. 'Why don't you ask him, yourself?'

'Fair enough. Can I give you a piece of advice?'

'Sure,' said O'Rourke.'

'You could do worse than have a few words with Marion Donnelly. She works for the Agency in the Office of African and Latin American Analysis. I'm pretty sure she went to school with Rosalita Campos Masterton.'

\*

Gordon sent O'Rourke to go and talk to Donnelly. They met on neutral ground at the Forwards Bookstore Café, on Clarendon Boulevard, north of Arlington. It was busy, but they found a table on the patio and ordered coffee. Donnelly was an attractive woman, in her thirties, with auburn hair, cut short, pale green eyes, and a rash of freckles across a slightly turned-up nose. O'Rourke toyed with the idea of talking to her about the old

country, to try and establish a rapport, but it didn't prove necessary. Donnelly came straight to the point.

'I'm really glad you're here, Agent O'Rourke—'

'Mel, please.'

'Oh. Sure. Okay. Anyway, for a while now I've been going round in circles in my head, trying to decide whether I ought to say something, talk to someone in the Agency about what I know.'

'But now you've decided to come forward?'

'Yes. I hoped that as a woman you'd understand my reluctance, recognise my anxiety that either I'd be dismissed as a hysterical woman, or the old boys' club would close ranks'.

'Or both.'

'Exactly'.

They both momentarily paid attention to their coffee.

'I'm all too familiar with both of those, Marion,' said O'Rourke, 'especially the latter. But I'm all ears. What *do* you know?'

Donnelly turned over a hand. 'Look, Mel, Rosie and I met at Columbia. I was on a Master's course in Latin American Studies and she was doing postgraduate work in curatorship, and we used to talk Spanish together. So, yeah, we've been friends a while.' She put down her coffee cup and looked at O'Rourke, defiantly, she thought. 'But my first loyalty is to my country. I love America. I know that sounds old-fashioned—'

'Not to me.'

O'Rourke was rewarded with a smile and a nod of the head. 'Rosie told me a lot about her family. Sure, her parents were members of the elite in Quito. Her mother was a professor of literature, and her dad was a government administrator. So, they were well off, but not rich by any means. Not rich-rich, if you know what I mean.'

'I do.'

'Anyway, I went round to their new house in Arlington the other day. First time I'd been there. Last time I'd visited, they were in a one-bed apartment in Falls Church. Nothing wrong with it, but it was pretty ordinary. Whereas, the new place ... Whew!'

'It cost half a million dollars, apparently.'

'That's right. And Rosie told me they met the asking price. Didn't even try to bargain them down.'

'And there's no sign of a mortgage.'

'That's what I thought. And you should see what they've done to it! Nothing but the best. Carpets, new windows, top-of-the-range kitchen, extensive landscaping, the works.'

O'Rourke nodded. They sat quietly for a moment finishing their coffee.

'There's talk,' O'Rourke said, 'about a favourite uncle who died and left Rosalita a pile of money.'

'Yeah? More than I know. Don't remember Rosie talking about an uncle, favourite or otherwise. Could be, I suppose. But it must have happened all of a goddam sudden.'

'Thanks, Marion. That's a great help. And do me a favour, will you? Keep this conversation under your hat.'

'Copy that.'

\*

O'Rourke reported all of this back to Gordon. She swivelled her chair, chewed her lip and played with a ballpoint pen, flicking it between her fingers. Finally, she sat forward, pointing the pen at O'Rourke.

'Okay, Mel,' she said. 'Time to put this sucker to bed. Talk to Jeannie in travel. I'll fax over the authorisation and she'll sort you out with tickets, hotel reservations and what have you. Go home, pack your bags and don't forget your passport. I take it it's up to date? You're catching the first flight available.'

'Okay. Where am I going?'

'Quito, *claro*.'

**Part III**  
***Endgame***





## Chapter Sixteen

*Quito, Ecuador, June 1983*

O'Rourke caught an Ecuatoriana de Aviación flight to Quito out of New York. She'd been to Latin American countries a few times – Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia and Peru – but never Ecuador. Now she supposed she could also count Panama, where there was a brief stopover. Otherwise, the ten-hour flight was largely uneventful, although if a smoking ban was going to be put in place any time soon, it couldn't come too quickly, as far as she was concerned. The landing, however, was something else.

As the Boeing 747 approached the Mariscal Sucre airport, the snow-capped peaks of the Andes Cordillera loomed around it. It seemed impossible that a plane taking off would somehow be able to clear these enormous mountains. During the flight, O'Rourke had been reading a book about the lunar landings to while away the time; maybe not the best choice, with hindsight. Anyway, as she looked out of the window at the massive sierras that seemed to be about to engulf the plane, she was reminded of some of the words of the Apollo astronauts. Neil Armstrong talked about how very, very small he felt, Alan Shepard about the sensation of fragility, of vulnerability. He was talking about his vision of the Earth from space, but it struck a chord with her, right there, right then, as what seemed an impossibly tiny aircraft took on the elements. As the plane banked, preparing its descent to the runway, O'Rourke could see, between the wispy clouds jostling for position, long black slashes winding along the flanks of the volcanoes. The city hove into view, it too appearing absurdly small, cradled in the craggy landscape. Immediately prominent was La Virgen con Alas, the winged statue of the Virgin of Quito, standing above El Panecillo hillside, protecting the city. As the plane completed its descent, the spires of churches and monasteries, and what passed for the capital's skyscrapers, became visible, along with the whitewashed façades and red roofs of the buildings in the old town. As the wheels touched down, and the plane rumbled safely along the runway, to O'Rourke's surprise, the other passengers burst into applause.

O'Rourke had thought about catching the airport shuttle bus to town, but there were plenty of taxis around and, what the hell, the Agency was picking up the tab. Jeannie had fixed her up with a room at the Huayna Capac on Avenida Patria. It was a

small, family-run hotel, with comfortable rooms, furnished in a faux-colonial style. Hers had a short vestibule, leading to a decent-size sitting room and a bedroom with en-suite bathroom. The sitting room had a fine view of the palm trees in the nearby Parque El Ejido. Once she'd settled in, she got into her running gear and did a couple of circuits of the park, taking it pretty easy, maybe eight- or nine-minute miles. Enough to work up a sweat as the late-afternoon sun sank behind the sierras. After a shower and an excellent leisurely dinner in the hotel bistro, she went to bed with a Cuba Libre from the minibar and the latest Robert Parker. Mitchell Masterton and his machinations could wait for the next day.

In the morning, after a breakfast of coffee, juice and pancakes with mango and passion fruit, O'Rourke set out for a meeting, arranged by Robert Olsson via his network of South American contacts. Because she was more or less flying under the radar, she was steering clear of the American Embassy and formal liaison with the Ecuadorian authorities. So, Olsson had arranged for her to meet an agent from the National Office of Intelligence, Juan Morales Wertheimer, at Café Mimosa on Avenida Amazonas. Amazonas was the central artery of the new town, lined with banks, shops, restaurants and cafés. It was a melting pot of *Quiteños*, pinstripe-suited businessmen rubbing shoulders with indigenous people from the north, dressed traditionally in ponchos and trilby-like hats. From time to time, the heavy traffic would be interrupted by a Quichua Indian astride a horse. No one seemed to find this unusual.

The coffee in the hotel had been made in the American style, but a helpful receptionist had warned O'Rourke that this was not the way it was typically served in Ecuador. Rather, the method was to boil it to within an inch of its life until it formed a thick sludge, and then to add hot milk or water to this *esencia*. In Café Mimosa, she decided to play safe and ask for *té* while she waited for Juan Morales, but even this proved a little more fraught than she'd expected. Her Spanish was passable, so she was confident in asking for some *limón* with her tea, only to find that in Ecuador that was the word for a lime, whereas the word for a lemon was *una lima*. Go figure.

Morales arrived at the tail-end of this little farrago and was wryly amused at O'Rourke's discomfiture. He was a slim man, a good three inches taller than her, with fair skin, blue-green eyes and shortish, fair hair. His colouring was not so much of a surprise given his matronymic. He looked to be in his early thirties and his round

glasses gave him a faintly bookish air. Though, for her, it was a pleasantly warm spring day, he was dressed in heavy jeans, a leather blouson jacket and a polo-neck jumper. After introducing himself, he sat down, and ordered a *pintado*, coffee with hot water and milk. He had been carrying a brown-paper parcel and laid it down on the table in front of him, before lighting a cigarette. He passed the parcel across the table. As she went to open it, he put a restraining hand over hers.

‘Later, Agent O’Rourke,’ he said. ‘Put it in your shoulder bag.’ He spoke excellent, barely-accented English. He leaned closer, and spoke softly. ‘It’s a Beretta 92, complete with holster.’

O’Rourke looked taken aback. He raised a hand.

‘Probably you won’t need it,’ he said. ‘But better safe than sorry, don’t you think? This is Quito, after all.’

‘But is Quito such a dangerous place?’ she asked. ‘That’s not what I heard.’

Morales shrugged. ‘It’s not Caracas or Medellín, but I wouldn’t want to be wandering around La Ronda at night unarmed. Besides, you probably feel undressed without it.’

‘True enough,’ she agreed. ‘So, thank you. By the way, where’d you learn to speak such impeccable English?’

He smiled. ‘Embassy brat. My father was a diplomat. He met my mother in Bonn, where I was born, then there were postings to London and Stockholm.’

He finished his coffee and stubbed out his cigarette. ‘We should be going,’ he said.

‘Where to?’ she asked.

‘I’ve made arrangements to see the manager at the Banco de Pichincha.’

‘Where’s that?’

Morales gestured with his head. ‘Just up the road, there. Near the Hotel Río Amazonas.’

‘Do they know why we’re coming?’

‘Yes. Sort of. They know we want to look at all the records they’ve got relating to the estate of Miguel Campos Urate and that it’s a matter of national security. At least, that’s what I told them. I don’t suppose you want to tell me what is actually going on?’

She gave Morales her best smile. ‘National security just about covers it.’

Before they left, O'Rourke went into the restroom, opened the parcel and discarded the brown-paper wrapping. As well as the semi-automatic pistol and holster, there was an extra ammunition clip. It was good to feel the Beretta in her hand, the same make as her own backup piece in the States. Morales was right: she didn't feel fully dressed without a gun. She checked there wasn't a round in the breech and ejected the magazine. Fifteen hollow-points. She'd seen the terrible damage these bullets could inflict on a victim, but from a law-enforcement point of view, they had the advantage that if one hit a building, it would flatten out and not ricochet off, endangering bystanders. Reinserting the magazine into the grip, she jacked a round into the chamber and made sure the safety was engaged. She replaced the pistol in its holster and put it back in her purse, along with the spare clip.

The bank was a modern, glass-fronted building with a canary-yellow façade. Morales produced his credentials and they were shown to a small ante-room outside the manager's office. They both declined the offer of coffee, and within ten minutes were ushered in. The manager was a short, stocky man, balding, probably in his fifties, wearing a grey three-piece suit and a striped tie in the colours of the Ecuadorian flag: yellow, blue and red. He greeted them warmly enough, though with a degree of reservation, perhaps wariness. Morales presented his credentials again, and introduced O'Rourke. The manager, Señor Vicente Roldós Bellerín, responded in English, not as good as Morales's, but certainly better than her Spanish. He explained he had prepared all the documents the bank had for their perusal – 'perusal' actually was the word he used – namely, bank statements, investment records, deeds of transfer, Señor Campos's will, and so on. They were welcome to use his office and copies could be made if they so wished. Roldós left them to it and they settled down to their work.

'What exactly are we looking for?' asked Morales. 'Can you at least tell me that?'

'Sure, that's easy enough. We want to find out just how much Campos had in his estate when he died, and to whom he left it.' To whom? She was beginning to sound like Señor Roldós.

It didn't take the two of them long to assemble a picture of Miguel Campos's fortunes. He was indeed a wealthy man, but not rich-rich, as Donnelly had put it. What's more, not long before he died, he invested a sizeable chunk of his savings in a deal to buy some land, to the north of the city. This he had left to his wife, Margarita. True,

given that it appeared he and Margarita were childless, he had left his niece, Rosalita, a nice little nest-egg, but with Morales's help, O'Rourke worked out that the amount came to about forty thousand US dollars. Nowhere near enough to explain the Master-tons' lavish lifestyle. She punched the air, somewhat to Morales's consternation.

They wrapped up their work, took some photocopies, thanked Señor Roldós for his assistance and made their way back towards the city centre. At Plaza Rocafuerte they prepared to part company, and O'Rourke thanked Morales again for what had been invaluable assistance.

'Without you,' she said, 'I doubt very much if I'd have got much change out of the Banco Pichincha.'

Morales smiled and airily waved his hand. '*De nada*. It was entirely my pleasure. I wish you *buen viaje*'.

As they set off to go their separate ways, he turned back towards her.

'Hey, Agent O'Rourke,' he called out. 'How about I show you some of our beautiful city this evening?'

Her first reaction was to say no. But why not? What did she have to lose?

'Your wife won't mind?' she asked.

He laughed. 'Not any more. We've been divorced for five years now. So, shall I pick you up from your hotel at, say, six-thirty?'

'Okay, then. And it's Mel.'

\*

O'Rourke spent the rest of the day reviewing the documents they'd copied at the bank, making notes, and preparing a report for the task force. With that done, she changed into sweats, ready for another run in the Ejido. She debated taking the gun, but decided against it, leaving it locked in the safe in her room. It was still pleasantly warm and dry in the late afternoon and the park was busy, with other joggers, couples out for a walk, families picnicking, vendors selling food or indigenous artefacts to the tourists, children kicking a ball about or playing on the swings, and more serious games of soccer taking place on marked-out pitches. She did three circuits, probably about four miles, pushing hard on the last one, so that she worked up a sweat and felt loose and relaxed when she got back to the hotel.

She spent fifteen minutes in the shower, mainly thinking about Masterton and the evidence they'd discovered, but also about Juan Morales, remembering how a lock of fair hair tumbled across his forehead, and that his body looked lean and hard. That way madness lay, so she punished herself with a burst of cold water.

As she dried off, she thought about what to wear. Nothing too special. This wasn't really a date as such, was it? Besides, she only had a limited wardrobe to choose from. So, something smart-casual was the order of the day. Pants, not a skirt or dress. She hummed and hawed, before settling on tailored Levi's, a pale-yellow silk shirt that seemed to accentuate the colour of her hair and eyes, and low-heeled pumps. Not being much for make-up, she applied just a touch of lip-gloss and blusher, and a hint of eye-shadow. Nor was she a great one for perfume, and it *really* wasn't a date, was it? Still, a dab of Rive Gauche on the wrists and behind the ears wouldn't hurt. Discreet gold loop-earrings completed the ensemble. Studying herself in the dressing-table mirror, she wondered about a light dusting of powder over her freckles, but gave herself a metaphorical slap upside the head. It *wasn't* a date, and, anyway: love her, love her freckles. Instead, she contented herself with brushing her hair one more time. All she needed now was the one accessory that no gal should leave home without: she took the Beretta out of the safe, out of habit checked that the safety was on, slipped it into its holster, and clipped it to her belt in the small of her back. She put on a cream-coloured blazer-style jacket that had been let out slightly to cover a holstered gun without projecting a bulge. One more glance in the mirror before draping a pashmina wrap round her shoulders and grabbing her purse, and she was ready to go down to reception. She paused at the door. The FBI didn't much go in for all that cloak-and-dagger stuff, what the spooks call tradecraft, but Green had given O'Rourke a few tips before she'd left DC. What harm could it do? She took a small tin of talcum powder from her purse and shook a little in the doorway. Stepping carefully over it, as she shut the door behind her, she wedged a tiny piece of cardboard between it and the doorjamb, just above the floor.

Juan Morales was waiting for her in reception. He rose from his chair with a broad smile on his face.

'Agent O'Rourke,' he said, bowing slightly, 'may I say how *atractiva* you look; quite the most charming FBI agent I've ever had the pleasure to meet.'

She laughed. 'Well, thank you kindly, *Señor Morales*. You don't scrub up so bad, yourself.'

Nor did he. He'd changed into a navy-blue suit with a buttoned-up Lacoste light-blue polo shirt, and carried a thick wool overcoat over his arm.

'Shall we take a taxi?' he asked. 'Or would you prefer to walk?'

'How far are we going?'

'Well, I would say it's about two kilometres to the city centre.'

'Oh, let's walk,' O'Rourke said. 'The idea was for you to show me the city, wasn't it?'

They walked through the park. The sun was setting behind the cordillera, but it was still daylight and if anything, the park was busier than when O'Rourke had gone for her run. They came out onto the Avenida 10 Agosto.

'I have to confess I didn't finish my homework on Ecuador's history before I came,' she said. 'What happened on August 10?'

'The first steps towards independence,' said Morales. 'In 1809 a coup ousted the Spanish, though it didn't last long. Took another twenty years or more before the republic was founded.'

The Avenida itself offered little of interest to the visitor, though it was obviously an important commercial artery, running through the city from north to south. She jokingly complained to Morales, suggesting that if this was the best Quito had to offer, she wasn't impressed.

*'Tenga paciencia, señorita, tenga paciencia.'*

They passed the Parque La Alameda and the Museo del Banco Central, the latter puzzling O'Rourke as to why anyone would want to visit a banking museum, until Morales explained that the building actually housed ancient archaeological pieces. Then they turned right onto Calle Guayaquil. This was more promising, with some elegant, older buildings which reminded her a little of Georgetown in DC. Before long, after strolling through the narrow, hilly streets of the *casco colonial*, they turned into Calle Chile and there before them was the Plaza de la Independencia, the heart of the city. This was definitely more like it, though O'Rourke was a little surprised at its modest size; not disappointed, just surprised. But it was an attractive, pleasing square, a haven of relative peace away from the busy bustle of the crowded city. In the centre was a square-shaped garden, enclosing a tall monument, topped by a bronze liberty statue,

which Morales explained was also in honour of August 10. One side of the square was dominated by the cathedral, the other three sides containing government buildings framed by colonial arcades and palm trees. They stopped at a café to have a beer and watch the world go by.

‘Tell me, Juan,’ she said, ‘this morning you warned me against wandering around La Ronda. Why was that?’

‘I don’t want to mislead you, Mel. La Ronda is a fascinating and beautiful *barrio*, well worth a wander. But after dark it can be, er, not dangerous exactly, but not entirely safe, either. Pickpockets and – what’s the word: muggers? – are rife.’

After they finished their drinks, they wended their way further into the old town. O’Rourke was glad to have Morales as a guide through the bewildering maze of narrow streets and alleys. As night fell, the numerous market stalls selling clothes, Panama hats, artefacts, trinkets and food, were closing up, but the streets were still crowded with people visiting the shops and bars, or simply enjoying *el paseo* – out for an evening stroll. ‘Calle Ronda’, actually Calle de Juan de Dios Morales, was a delight, even if its grandeur was clearly fading: a narrow, pedestrianised, cobbled street, crammed with artists’ workshops, candle-makers, shoe-repairers and old blue-and-white houses with colonial-style balconies. There were miniature trees in rectangles of bricks at their base, and climbing plants clinging to the rails of the balconies.

She took Morales by the arm. ‘Juan,’ she said, ‘it’s marvellous. But the name: is Juan de Dios Morales an ancestor of yours?’

Morales laughed. ‘Quite possibly. Though Morales is not an uncommon name. It was a long time ago.’

‘Oh! So, who was he?’

‘A lawyer and one of the leaders of the 1809 coup I was telling you about.’

‘What happened to him?’

‘The Spanish executed him.’

They walked on. O’Rourke had noticed that there had been a few beggars on the steps of the cathedral and more came into view as they approached the church and convent in the Plaza San Francisco. Crossing Calle Simon Bolívar, she heard a buzzing sound growing ever louder. Mindful of Morales’s warnings, she’d been keeping a grip on her purse, and she clutched hold of the strap more tightly. A moped zipped by



behind them. Turning her head, O'Rourke could see there were two young men on board. She noticed there was something gleaming in the hands of the pillion passenger. They stopped abruptly, turned round, mounted the pavement and headed back towards O'Rourke and Morales. She shouted a warning to him and he jumped out of the way. The gleam in the passenger's hand turned out to be a long-bladed knife, but before he could wield it to cut the strap, O'Rourke unhooked the purse from her shoulder and swung it with all her force into his face. He fell backwards off the moped onto the cobbled road, the knife skittering away. The moped paused momentarily, before the rider revved it back into life and took off at speed. Morales moved threateningly towards the other young man, who just for a second cast his eyes at the knife, before thinking better of it and taking to his heels, pursued by catcalls from passers-by who had stopped to watch.

Morales picked up the knife and eyed it appraisingly. '*Bueno,*' he said, 'this certainly could have done some damage.' He laughed. 'But I bet you gave them the surprise of their lives. I don't suppose they expected a *gringa* to pack such a punch.'

By then, an officer from the Policia Nacional had moseyed into view, and he tried officiously to detain them while he took down all the details of the attempted theft. There had to be a proper record of such events, he insisted. However, Morales showed him his credentials, received a more-or-less crisp salute in response, and the officer trudged away, clutching the knife.

By then, darkness had fallen and the plaza, busy with tourists, was lit up, both by streetlights, and the lamps on the balconies and in the archways of the convent. They dallied there for a while, Morales admitting he knew little of the origins of the religious complex, save that it had been built in the middle of the sixteenth century on the site of an Inca palace.

They had dinner at the Taverna Quiteña on Calle Manabí, near the Plaza del Teatro. There was sea bass *a la plancha*, and suckling pig served with grilled corn and tiny roast new potatoes. Morales had tried to talk O'Rourke into having spit-roasted *cuy*, but she'd kept guinea pigs when she was a kid, and she couldn't bring herself to eat one. They drank some decent Chilean wines, Morales explaining that local ones were mediocre at best. The conversation flowed easily for two people who had only just met. Morales gently ribbed her for the way she dealt with the would-be muggers,

insisting he wouldn't want to be in the way of a punch from her right hand, but she could tell he was actually impressed. They talked a little of their upbringings, their failed marriages, their careers, and even their views on US foreign policy. Morales turned out to be more of an admirer of President Reagan than she was.

Over coffee and Gran Duque d'Alba, a toffee-flavoured Spanish brandy which she enjoyed much more than she'd expected to, Morales probed her mildly again about their exploits at the bank.

'*Bien,*' he said, 'we established that Señor Campos Urarte was comfortably off and you seemed satisfied enough with that. In fact, you seemed like the cat who had licked the cream. Care to enlighten me, if only a little?'

Feeling mellow after the wine and brandy, and grateful for the help he'd given her, O'Rourke thought it wouldn't do any harm to throw him a small bone.

'I can't say too much, Juan. Highly classified and all that. But I will say that the bank records show that someone we are interested in has been lying through his teeth. So, I thank you again for all your assistance today. And for your company.'

'I assure you,' he said, laying a hand on her arm, 'the pleasure was all mine, *Señorita.*'

That led to the first awkward moment of the evening. There was an obvious invitation in that gesture and in his eyes, an invitation O'Rourke was more than half-tempted to accept. After all, it was a long time since she'd been with a lover and Juan Morales was an attractive man who represented the promise of a good time, no strings attached. Yet she demurred, telling him that she had to get up early the next day to catch her flight. Which was true, but only half the story. She couldn't entirely explain her reluctance, even to herself, though an image had come into her mind, unbidden, of a wryly-smiling Michael Green. She mentally shook her head. He had no business interfering in her love-life, even if he was hundreds of miles away and completely oblivious!

The second moment of mild awkwardness came when it was time to settle the check. Morales tried to insist on paying, but O'Rourke pointed out she could claim it on expenses. What's more, though she had no doubt the meal, especially with the foreign wines and brandy, was expensive in Ecuadorian terms, it was pretty run of the mill by US standards, made even more so by the discount she got for offering US dollars.

They did share a proper kiss, which made her briefly wonder about whether she'd made the right decision, before Morales saw her into a taxi. O'Rourke told him she would have been happy to walk, and he really didn't need to worry about her. She was a big girl and could look after herself.

'It's not you I'm worried about,' he said. 'You might get attacked again, and then some *pobre tío* would probably end up in hospital, or worse.'

At the hotel, O'Rourke checked out to save having to do so in the morning. It wouldn't take her long to pack, then she'd be ready for a shower and a good night's sleep. In truth, she wasn't really paying attention as she approached her room, and if she hadn't fumbled her keycard, she might have missed it. She'd forgotten about the security measures she'd taken before leaving, but there in the corridor was the piece of cardboard she'd stuck between the door and the jamb. Maybe it had just fallen out. Maybe. But just in case, O'Rourke reached behind her, pulled the Beretta from its holster, jacked a round into the chamber and clicked off the safety. Taking off her shoes and leaving them in the corridor, as quietly as she could, she ran the keycard through the reader. Pushing open the door a few inches, she used a pen flashlight to look through the crack. There was a partial footprint in the talcum powder. Silently offering thanks to Michael Green, she eased the door open just enough to slip inside. The door was on a self-closing mechanism and O'Rourke had to hold on to it to stop it swinging noisily shut. She stood in the vestibule, trying to accustom her eyes to the dark and listening intently for any noises from within. Was that a rustling sound she could hear? She took off her shawl and put it and her purse down on the floor. Holding her pistol in both hands, she padded forward, through the sitting room. The bedroom door was open, and she was sure she could make out the outline of a figure inside. The figure moved, revealing the glow from a torch perched on the bed. There was enough light for her to see that the safe door was open, and that there were papers spread on the counterpane. She heard the sound of a camera shutter clicking.

Despite her best efforts, she must have made some noise, or the unknown intruder had a sixth sense that there was someone else in the room. Either way, he started to turn towards her.

'Don't move,' O'Rourke said. 'Stay where you are.'

One hand on the Beretta, she inched her way sideways until she could feel the light switch and turned it on. Sensing, perhaps, that he'd been given a chance, the man turned round further towards her and reached under his jacket. He was quick, clearing his holster and starting to bring his pistol up to chest level. But not quick enough. O'Rourke put two shots into him, dead centre.

## Chapter Seventeen

Washington DC, July-August 1983

Inevitably, there was fallout from the shooting in O'Rourke's hotel room. In theory, it could have caused an international incident – after all, she shouldn't really have been carrying a gun, let alone using it to take the life of an intruder. But a number of factors helped ease the situation. First, the police found that her would-be assailant was armed with a 9mm Makarov PM semi-automatic pistol, which made them predisposed to accept her story that her life was in danger, a story made all the more credible by the second factor, their discovery that he was a known KGB heavy called Gregor Ostopenko. Thirdly, and most importantly, Juan Morales turned up and took charge of the situation, insisting she was *persona grata* and under his protection. He made sure that she caught her plane as planned, even escorting her to the airport and shepherding her through the check-in process. He also talked her through the incident.

'Have you ever had to take a life before?' he asked.

'No, I haven't,' she said. 'In fact, I've never had to fire my weapon in anger.'

He studied her, carefully.

'Take my word for it,' he said. 'Right now, you seem fine, as if it's just something that happened in the line of duty, but it'll catch up with you at some point. It's no small thing to take a life, even when it's completely justified. Get help. I mean it.'

In fact, she had no choice. On her return to DC, she had to undergo mandatory counselling. Like most agents, she outwardly resented the intrusion, professing to believe that it was a waste of her time and the Bureau's resources. Inwardly, she knew that Juan Morales had been right: without the therapy, she might have cracked up.

In her absence, the work of the RACETRACK task force had continued. Gordon brought her up to date.

'Two things,' said Gordon. 'First of all, Masterton had to take a polygraph test at the CIA offices at Tysons Corner. I listened to the tapes. He went out of his way to adopt a friendly tone with the technician; butter him up, even. At least the technician questioned him about his finances. Here's the transcript:'

Technician: 'Mitch, let me ask you one last question. Do you have any source of income, other than your Agency salary?'

Masterton: 'To be honest, Mac, I do. See, my wife Rosalita's uncle passed a while back, and he left a bundle to his favourite niece.'

Technician: 'I'm sorry, Mitch, your response indicates a deception. Can you account for it?'

Masterton: 'Well, Mac, I guess you could say I'm kinda embarrassed, you know, having to live off my wife's family. Get what I'm saying?'

'Jesus," said O'Rourke. "No follow up? Could the technician have given him an easier ride?'

Gordon shrugged. 'It is what it is. Still, the information you've brought back from Quito nails Masterton to a lie, doesn't it? And there's the second thing.

'Which is?'

'We received an encrypted message from Green.'

'Where from, London?'

'No, Berlin.'

'What—?'

'Apparently, while you were in Quito, he was helping exfiltrate an asset from behind the Iron Curtain.'

O'Rourke nodded her head. 'Huh. He did talk to me about that maybe happening some time.'

'Anyway, you know he was knocked down in Prague last summer?'

'Sure. He told me that he'd partly lost his memory, that there was something he thought he needed to remember, but he couldn't bring it to mind. Why, has it come back to him?'

'Not exactly. It turns out that what was nagging him was something the asset had told him and now he's reminded Green what it was.'

'Which was?'

'Only that COSSACK was having an affair with a Latin-American woman.'

O'Rourke was stunned into silence. Gordon carried on.

'Okay,' she said, 'it's circumstantial, and hardly definitive, but if it isn't a reference to Masterton and Rosalita Campos, it's a hell of a coincidence.'

'Surely,' said O'Rourke, 'that and the financial stuff must be enough for an arrest warrant?'

'Perhaps,' Gordon replied, rocking her hand from side to side, 'but let's not jump the gun. What it is, is enough to get warrants to step up surveillance on him.'

\*

What it also meant was that, given no one else on the shortlist had raised anywhere near as many flags, Masterton's status as prime suspect was confirmed. Enough so that Joseph Philips Baxter, agreed to hand over the investigation fully to the Bureau. Only the FBI had the authority to arrest an American citizen on US soil. Not that the inception of a full-blown FBI operation, codenamed NIGHTOWL, meant the winding-up of RACETRACK. Apart from anything else, it took some days before NIGHTOWL swung into gear. The task force carried on trawling through personnel files, analysing financial records, and revisiting the transcripts of the interviews with the other nine men on the shortlist. Belts and braces, as Green put it. The intention was to shore up the case against Masterton, while ensuring they hadn't overlooked anything in relation to the other potential suspects.

NIGHTOWL, put together by the chief of the intelligence division, Joseph P. O'Shaughnessy, was to be headed up by Special Agent-in-Charge Bertram Malloy, and under the day-to-day direction of his deputy, Assistant SAC, Eddie O'Connell. The operation was based in the Washington Field Office at Buzzard Point, commonly known just as the 'Point'. McCain and O'Rourke were swallowed up into an investigation and surveillance team of fifty or so operatives, some co-opted from the North Virginia Field Office. O'Rourke expected they would be split up and assigned to different units, but O'Connell wanted them to continue to work together.

Their first task was to scout the neighbourhood where the Mastertons lived with their baby daughter, Laura, at 3436 North Utah Street, in the Gulf Branch district of Arlington. Neither of the agents was very familiar with Arlington, which was one reason why O'Connell had chosen them for the scouting mission.

'I want fresh eyes on this,' he said. 'No assumptions, no preconceptions. Just get a real feel for the place.'

To that end, rather than going straight to Gulf Branch, located in the north of Arlington, on the border with Fairfax County, instead from the Point they crossed the Potomac at the George Mason Memorial Bridge, skirting the cemetery to the south. O'Rourke was driving, with McCain handling the map-reading, at which she thought he was surprisingly adept, for a man. Which was just as well, considering what seemed to both of them the bizarre layout of Arlington. North Utah was like so many of the

streets: very long – hence the Mastertons’ address in the three-thousands – running more or less south to north, and intersected by major thoroughfares, such as Langston Boulevard, Lee Highway and Custis Memorial Parkway. But they couldn’t work out why these streets retained their name throughout their length, given that in many cases a street would come to a full stop, with no outlet, and only start up again hundreds of yards away. For all his skills, McCain often went wrong, taking them into one of those dead-end streets. It didn’t help, either, that it was eighty-five degrees outside, and the air-conditioning had seen better days.

‘Hey, Chester,’ O’Rourke said, after another wrong turn, ‘do you want me to take over? Maybe bring a bit of female intuition to the situation?’

‘What I want,’ McCain spluttered, ‘is for you to keep your eyes on the road, and for someone to bring me the genius who designed this road layout, so I can shake him warmly by the throat!’

If anything, North Utah Street was the worst of the lot. It began at North Glebe Road and ran more or less due north for a mile or so, before disappearing and inexplicably resurfacing north of the Lee Highway. The Mastertons lived in the final section, a self-contained stretch of four hundred yards or so, bounded to the north by Glebe Road Park, and to the south by a golf course. The street was intersected by Thirty-Fifth Street North, which cut it roughly in half. They parked briefly a few doors down from the Mastertons’ house, located near the northern end of the street. It wasn’t the sort of place where you could linger in a car on surveillance duty for any length of time.

‘What do you think, Chester?’ O’Rourke asked.

He drummed his fingers on the dashboard. ‘There are definitely advantages from our point of view. To get out of his street he’s got to turn left or right onto Thirty-Fifth Street, and then, to get anywhere, he has to take either Glebe Road to the west or Military Road to the east. Makes it easier to set up on him.’

‘Only if he’s going somewhere and not driving around aimlessly into one dead end after another.’

‘Ha-ha. The house is good for us too, don’t you think? On its own, set back from the road. Surrounded by trees and bushes and stuff. Not hard to get in and out without being seen.’



‘No, even assuming there’d be anyone home to see anything. What do you reckon, doctors, lawyers, important paper-clip sorters, corporate big-shots, that sort of thing?’

‘Sure. The country club set. In fact, ...’ He consulted his maps again. ‘... there *is* a country club, on that golf course we passed. But I don’t think that means there’ll be no one around during the day. You know, retirees, soccer moms, writers, artists and such.’

McCain’s inflection, as he pronounced the words ‘writers’ and ‘artists’, was, O’Rourke thought, much the same as if he’d said ‘serial killers’ or ‘child-abusers’. Meanwhile, he discreetly took a few polaroid photographs and they turned around and headed out of North Utah Street, taking the time to drive in a kind of distended triangle along Glebe Road and then down Military Road, before returning to base. On the way, they noticed that there was a house for rent not far from the Mastertons’, on Thirty-Fifth Street. There wasn’t a clear line of sight, because a corner of the park was in the way, but O’Connell was delighted.

‘Right,’ he said, using a huge handkerchief to wipe the sweat off his face and neck. The air-con in the office didn’t seem to work any better than in the car. ‘I’ll sort out the lease and we’ll get some agents moved in, toot fucking sweet.’

O’Rourke suppressed a grin. Eddie O’Connell liked to pretend he was just a back-street kid from Brooklyn, who had only the barest acquaintance with cosmopolitan sophistication, and certainly no facility for languages. In fact, he had majored in linguistics before completing a Masters in Criminology at Columbia University, and it was well known that he knocked off the fiendishly difficult *Washington Post* crossword in twenty minutes. Or less.

O’Connell tapped his teeth with a pencil, then used it to point at one of McCain’s photos. ‘See across the road there, that oak tree—’

‘Looks like a sycamore to me, boss,’ said McCain.

‘I don’t care if it’s a fucking monkey-puzzle tree, we’re going to stick a mini-camera with a wide-angled lens up there, and our agents in the house’ll be able to monitor any comings and goings.’

That proved easier said than done. There was no problem renting the house, and four agents moved in, under the cover of corporate executives temporarily assigned to Washington. The plan was for them to work a rota monitoring the pictures from the camera. But getting it up the tree wasn’t so straightforward. Eventually, someone

suggested getting hold of a cherry-picker truck from a local tree-felling company, which did the trick.

O'Connell got warrants to plant bugs in the house, a quick in-and-out by a couple of technicians on a quiet midweek afternoon, when Masterton was at work at Langley, Rosalita was attending a PhD seminar at Georgetown University, and Laura was at the childminder's. But the tech guys didn't put a bug in their telephone itself, because O'Connell decided instead to get the phone company to attach an extra circuit at the switching station. Doing it this way meant that there was no chance that the targets could inadvertently discover they were being tapped. Any phone conversations would be monitored and recorded by a team of three agents each working eight-hour shifts at the Point. This wire-tap required approval by a special panel of federal judges, under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, but that caused no problems.

The warrants also entitled them to plant a beacon under Masterton's car. O'Rourke and McCain had a hand in it. Gordon told Masterton that they wanted him to speak at an FBI counterintelligence seminar at the J. Edgar Hoover building. He was like a cat that swallowed the canary about the invitation, according to Gordon. When he arrived, he was directed to drive into the basement garage, and McCain was there to meet him and escort him into the building and up to the fifth-floor conference room. O'Rourke joined a couple of technicians to oversee them inserting the bug. They explained to her that this wasn't a straightforward task. Pontiac Firebirds had a reputation for electrical circuitry breakdowns, so they'd need to be particularly careful about where they put it under the chassis.

Their caution proved to be well-placed. The beacon wouldn't be able to pinpoint exactly where the Firebird was located, just the general area and direction of travel, but no one had anticipated it continually cutting out. That didn't mean it was completely useless, because it could be turned on again by remote control, but only by someone following close behind.

O'Connell pulled in one of the tech guys, who shrugged, saying they'd known in advance the electricians were on the fritz.

'It could be anything,' he said. 'Who knows? The lights, the windscreen wipers, the radio, the heater. Anything.'

'The heater! In fucking July?'

‘Well, maybe not. But ... you know?’

He shrugged again. O’Connell threatened to grab the tech guy and ‘rip him a new one’. McCain managed to calm him down, repeating his observation that Masterton had very limited access points from his house. The tech guy scuttled away.

‘Right, right,’ said O’Connell. He unrolled a map of the Glebe Park area. He pointed at Glebe Road and Military Road. ‘We’ll set up surveillance here. Two teams on each, one either side of Thirty-Fifth Street North.’ He turned to McCain and O’Rourke. ‘You two scouted the area. Where are the best locations?’

‘There’s quite a few,’ said McCain. ‘On both roads there are car parks we can use, you know, at malls, supermarkets, McDonalds, KFC, that sort of thing.’

‘Okay, then. Let’s get it done. Pickup trucks, vans, cars, motorbikes, the works.’

Collating the surveillance reports, O’Rourke was quickly able to establish that Masterton was very much a man of routine. He would get to Langley for a scheduled nine o’clock start, although he was often late, she noted, always by the same route. She traced his journey on one of O’Connell’s maps: left turn out of North Utah Street onto 35<sup>th</sup> Street North, then left again onto Military Road, which joined North Glebe Road northwest of Fort Ethan Allen Park, leading to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, which took him all the way to the back entrance at CIA headquarters. Philips Baxter had authorised the issuing of fake CIA identity cards, so that some FBI agents could follow Masterton into the building and if necessary, take up position in the parking lot later in the day to be sure to be on his tail when he left. They reported that he would work until he went to lunch for an hour or so in the canteen at around twelve-thirty, leave at six o’clock at the latest, and go home, retracing his route. The only variations were occasionally taking Laura to the childminder in Donaldson Run before work, in which case he’d get to Langley via Glebe Road, and sometimes stopping off on the way home to get groceries, but that was it. O’Rourke nodded to herself. Even with the faulty beacon, it wasn’t going to be hard for the surveillance teams to keep tabs on him, without too much risk of being spotted. O’Rourke tried to put herself in Masterton’s position. If she were COSSACK, would she be hyper-sensitive to the possibility of surveillance? She was pretty sure she would, but she wasn’t him, and she had the impression that he was both sloppy and arrogant.

O'Rourke and McCain took it in turns to monitor the recordings from the tap on the Mastertons' phone. Rosalita phoned her mother in Quito two or three times a week, usually for an hour or so at a time, and McCain, who had no Spanish, moaned about having to plough through the translated transcripts of their inconsequential chatter. It must, O'Rourke thought, have cost Masterton a fortune. But it turned out not to be a waste of their time. On one evening's recording, O'Rourke, who listened to the conversation and paused it as necessary to check the transcript, was sure she heard the older woman asking her daughter if she could let her have some money, maybe even a thousand dollars, because she needed some new furniture. The transcript confirmed O'Rourke was right:

'A thousand dollars? Of course, mama, I will wire it to you tomorrow.'

'Thank you, sweetheart, you are a good daughter. It will not be a strain on your finances?'

'No, mama, this has been a good month.'

'Mitchell has been given a raise, perhaps?'

'Ah, no, not that. The Government never recognises his true worth. But he has a friend, from university, I think. Mitch gives him investment advice and he gets a commission. Sometimes it runs into many thousands of dollars.'

This was paydirt, given that Masterton had told the Agency his wealth had come from his wife's inheritance, a statement subsequently contradicted by O'Rourke's own research in Quito. Even then, Bertram Malloy wasn't satisfied.

'Sure,' he said, 'we've got a mound of circumstantial evidence. But I want to nail the bastard to the wall. I want photographs of him meeting his handler or servicing a dead drop. Go out there and catch him at it!'

O'Rourke was convinced that it wouldn't take long for them to get the evidence Malloy wanted. Masterton's habitual behaviour made it easy to keep tabs on him and she was sure that he would fuck up soon enough and get caught red-handed. So, she was in confident mood when one Wednesday morning, just after eight o'clock, she and McCain sat in an unmarked, three-year-old Ford Granada sedan at a McDonalds on Military Road. They were well supplied with coffee and English muffins, not expecting Masterton to come past for a half-hour or so. Then the radio began to blare. There was a barrage of expletive-heavy chatter going on between the agents at their various

locations. It was hard to make any sense of it. Finally, O'Connell came on the air, calling for order and quietening everyone down.

'What's going on, Eddie?' O'Rourke asked.

'We fucked up, that's what.'

'How?'

'One of the geniuses at the rental house finally got round to looking at the pictures from the camera opposite Masterton's from earlier this morning.'

'And?'

'And that lazy fucker, who we believed didn't even know there *were* two six o'clocks in the same day, actually left home this morning at six minutes after and was back home by a quarter of seven.'

That led to another cacophonous outpouring over the airways. O'Connell quietened everyone down again. 'All right, guys, let's make sure that he goes into work as usual, then I want to see all senior agents back at base and we'll work out how to play it from there.'

At the briefing back at the Point, O'Connell homed in on their blithe acceptance of Masterton's habitual behaviour.

'Look, guys,' he began, 'I'm not breaking anybody's balls here – no offence, Mel – but let's face it: we got slack. We got complacent, goddammit! We assumed we knew what the lazy schmuck would do.'

'You're right, Eddie,' said O'Rourke. 'We just weren't ready for him to break his usual routine.'

'Well, from now on, we are going to be ready. It's gonna be round-the-clock surveillance. If we need more guys, we'll get 'em. What ain't gonna happen is us getting caught with our pants down again. Kapeesh?'

There was a lot of nodding and approving grunts from the assembled agents. One of them asked, 'So what's next, Eddie?'

'We get on his ass and we stay there, that's what,' said O'Connell, emphasising his point by banging his fist on the table. 'Follow him home tonight, then make sure we're ready if he goes out again. We don't know what he did this morning, but it sure didn't take too long. I have a hunch he's got unfinished business.'

O'Connell's hunch was right. Masterton left home at about seven o'clock in the evening, with McCain and O'Rourke on his tail, switching in and out with other teams as he drove fast out of Arlington.

'Where the fuck is he going?' said O'Rourke.

'Wherever it is, that piece of shit beacon ain't gonna tell us,' said McCain. 'It's failed again.'

O'Rourke got on the radio. 'Anyone got eyeballs? The tracker's gone down again. Over.'

No-one could report a positive sighting, until one of the motor bike riders radioed in.

'Got him. He's going south along Military Road, indicating to turn left onto Lee Highway.'

'Where *is* the fucker going?' blurted McCain.

The teams tracked Masterton along Lee Highway, which eventually merged into the Custis Memorial Parkway, leading to the Francis Scott Key Bridge across the river, taking him into Georgetown. He drove along M Street as far as Wisconsin, paused at the jazz club, Blues Alley, then turned around and headed back to the bridge, and home. All this had taken not much more than twenty minutes. Along with the other teams, McCain and O'Rourke toured the area around the route he'd taken, in the hope of spotting something that might indicate a message had been left, either for or by Masterton. Nothing.

'What the hell was that about, Chester?' O'Rourke asked. 'Do you think he made us, and was just yanking our chain?'

'I doubt it. My guess is we were just unlucky. I'm betting that all he was doing at Blues Alley was checking to see if a chalk mark he'd left at a signal site had been rubbed out. He must have left a package in a dead drop somewhere else and someone had collected it. We found nothing, because there was nothing to find.'

'Fuck!'

'Yeah.'

O'Connell fumed. 'We're gonna get this guy. Keep up the surveillance. Constant monitoring of the cameras, phone, all that shit. If he takes a piss I wanna know about it. Comprenday?'

The surveillance of the Mastertons was ramped up to the maximum, in all the ways O'Connell had specified. In addition, their finances were subjected to continuing detailed scrutiny by Olsson and Gordon, and one Sunday his office at Langley was searched, quietly and discreetly. All this yielded bits and pieces of potentially incriminating evidence – the odd file that should have been returned to the vault; some cryptic phone conversations that suggested possible intrigue; large amounts of cash broken up and deposited in several different bank accounts – but not the smoking gun Malloy was insisting on. O'Rourke was not alone among the foot soldiers to become more and more frustrated. Desperate even. She tried to persuade Eddie O'Connell to get the boss to see that they couldn't carry on like this forever. Sooner or later, Masterton would spot the tail or in some other way realise he was under investigation and then the risk was that he would cut his losses and bolt for Moscow.

'We need to go with what we've got, Eddie.'

'Sorry, it ain't enough.'

'Enough for an arrest warrant, surely. Then we can get him in the box and sweat the fuck out of him.'

O'Connell opened his arms wide. 'I get it, Mel. I do. You want this guy. / want this guy. But it is what it is.'

So, they carried on, following him to and from work, monitoring the camera pictures, listening to the phone taps. Nothing. Towards the end of August, Masterton took himself and his family off on vacation up by the Great Lakes. O'Connell sent a team up there in the hope that he was really going away to meet his handler, but nothing came of it. However, it was that hiatus that ultimately led to the breakthrough they so desperately craved.

## Chapter Eighteen

*Washington DC, September 1983*

When the breakthrough came, it wasn't through the heavy surveillance or because of any of the hi-tech gadgetry, and nor did it require a warrant or special approval. What it did require was the old-fashioned method of them getting their hands dirty – very dirty, in fact. And, it all came from a suggestion from Michael Green. O'Rourke hadn't seen much of him in recent weeks, Operation NIGHTOWL having taken over her life. He called her, wondering whether it might be good to catch up, given that she might be at something of a loose end, what with Masterton enjoying the rustic charms of rural north Michigan. She agreed to have a drink and something to eat in the Brickskeller, well known as a pubby bar near to Dupont Circle. That night, O'Rourke was running late, and so after a quick shower, she didn't dally over choosing her outfit: pressed Levi's, a pale-yellow short-sleeve silk shirt, a powder-blue linen jacket, and low-heeled pumps. A pair of drop earrings that matched the jacket, a hint of eye-shadow and a touch of lip-gloss completed the ensemble, apart from her Bureau-issued Smith and Wesson 13, three-fifty-seven Magnum revolver, which she tucked into her purse.

O'Rourke was on time, but Green was there already, waiting for her outside. He was wearing cream-coloured chinos, and a burgundy Ralph Lauren polo shirt, with a navy-blue jacket over his arm. He looked good. Very good.

'Wow!' he exclaimed. 'You don't scrub up half bad, for a shiksa.'

'Thank you kindly, I think. You don't look too dusty, yourself.'

O'Rourke had never been to that bar before, but it was obviously a regular haunt of Green's and he was greeted like a long-lost friend by the staff. Even on a Wednesday night, it was busy, but it was big enough for them to find a quiet little table in a corner. The lighting was low, the tables were bare wood, and the chairs open-backed with thinly padded red leatherette seats. The walls, living up to the bar's name, were bare brick, the only decoration being recessed glass-fronted cabinets holding dozens of bottles of beer of many kinds, and old brewery signs, such as the one from Harp above their table. Bob Seger's *Night Moves* was playing at a medium level from the corner speakers. Green ordered an IPA on draught, but not before he'd explained to her its origins, provenance, and particular flavour qualities. In one ear and out the other. Still, emboldened, O'Rourke went for a Stella Artois, rather than her usual Bud and was



surprised by how much more flavour there was than she was used to. They both ordered steaks.

After a little catch-up small talk, they began to discuss Masterton and NIGHTOWL.

‘That titbit your asset gave you,’ said O’Rourke, ‘about COSSACK’s Latina lover, really helped us in making Masterton our prime suspect.’

Green shook his head. ‘I wish I’d been able to remember it sooner. But the attack on me in Prague just knocked it right out of my head. I didn’t even realise that what was nagging at me was something my asset had told me.’

‘Don’t beat yourself up, Michael. It was hardly your fault.’

‘I suppose you’re right but, I don’t know, it just makes me feel so helpless.’

O’Rourke drank some more Stella. She could get a taste for it. ‘Helpless? That’s not what I’ve heard. There’s a rumour going round that you pulled some pretty fancy shit over there in Europe.’

Green laughed. ‘Exaggeration, I bet. But I suppose I had my moments.’

He couldn’t tell her all the details about his escapades, but the story about getting an agent and his family out from behind the Iron Curtain in packing cases made her laugh. In fact, she was noticing how often it was that he did make her laugh. The episode at the border when he got his pistol out didn’t sound so funny, though.

‘Who did you think you were,’ she asked, ‘Clint Eastwood?’

His turn to laugh. ‘Exactly. If I’d only known the Czech for “do you feel lucky, punk?”, I’d have been in business.’

‘Idiot. But seriously, you must have been scared for your life.’

‘You’d have thought so. But at the time I wasn’t, particularly.’

‘Really?’

He held up a hand. ‘Don’t get me wrong. I’m not really making myself out to be some macho hero, like Dirty Harry in disguise. It’s just that the combination of adrenaline and my absolute determination not to lose another asset saw me through. Not so much brave, as single-minded. Obsessed, even. Afterwards ... well, that’s a different matter. Anyway, I gather you have a tale of derring-do to tell of your own. That little affair in Quito?’

She took a slug of beer, as she thought about how to answer. 'So, you heard about that? Yeah, it was a scary moment. But you do what you have to do, you know? Training, instinct, adrenaline, as you said, whatever. It kicks in when you need it.'

'Well, if there were a God, I'd thank him for it. But you must have been affected by having to take a life like that. Anyone would be.'

For a moment, she looked uncharacteristically vulnerable and he laid a hand on hers. Fleeting, something passed between them as they looked at each other ...

Then their steaks arrived, accompanied by a steaming platter of fried potatoes piled high. The moment had gone.

The steaks were big, fat and juicy, just how she liked them.

'Hey, Michael,' she said, between mouthfuls. 'I thought you Brits liked your meat well done; burnt to death, in fact. Isn't this a bit bloody for your taste?'

He grinned. 'I got used to it in Helsinki. Only there it was reindeer steak. Overcook that, and you might as well eat your own shoes.'

'Reindeer! Good Lord. I wouldn't be able to look Rudolph in the eye, ever again.'

Once they'd finished their meal, and ordered another round of drinks, they got back to talking about NIGHTOWL. O'Rourke told Green about her fears that sooner or later, Masterton would cotton on to the fact that the FBI were on his case, before they'd uncovered conclusive evidence identifying him as the mole.

'The teams tailing him are good,' she said, 'don't get me wrong, but it only takes one little thing, something unforeseen, maybe, and we're toast. We need to catch him in the act, and we need to do it quickly.'

'Before he jumps ship, you mean? Do you think there's a dacha waiting for him on the Black Sea?'

'Maybe. But I'm also scared that if he thinks he's about to be grabbed up, he'll make sure the KGB gets a list of any of our assets he hasn't already betrayed. We can't let anyone else die, Michael.'

Green asked exactly what measures had been taken so far. When she told him, he pursed his lips.

'What about his rubbish?' he asked.

'Come again?'

'His trash, his garbage.'

He laughed at the look of sheer incomprehension on her face.

'Look,' he said, 'I know it's what you guys would call a Hail Mary, but it must be worth a try. Collect his trash, and go through it with a fine-tooth comb. You never know what tasty bits of evidence you'll find. If there *is* anything to find.'

'Along with chicken bones, half-eaten pizzas, used diapers, and God knows what else! *If* there's anything to find? You are joking, aren't you, Michael? He'd have to be a complete moron to leave something incriminating lying around, even in his trash. Wouldn't he?'

Green raised his eyebrows and looked at her sideways.

'You think he *is* that much of an idiot?' she asked.

'Not an idiot, no. but he's not as clever as he thinks he is. Remember, I've met the guy, and we've been doing a deep dive into him. It's clear to me Mitchell Masterton is arrogant, over-confident and sloppy. Not a winning combination.'

'I agree. But you're not saying that he's too slapdash to be the mole, are you? Look at all the evidence. Look at all the *money*, for chrissakes.'

Green put up his hands. 'You're right, Mel, you're right. He must be COSSACK. It's just that I don't know how he's got away with it so long without fucking up.'

They toyed with their drinks for a while.

'Listen, Mel,' said Green, 'did you know that the Agency has lost another asset in Moscow? Disappeared, feared dead, a couple of days ago.'

'Shit! Who told you?'

'Catherine. She said things were so bad now that their operation in Moscow was virtually dead in the water.'

'As bad as that? You see, Michael, how important it is that we catch the mole and stop this happening?'

'Yeah, of course. I get it. After all, you know I lost an asset, myself, a few weeks ago? Codename KOJAK.'

'Fuck. Really? I mean, I'd heard an agent had disappeared, presumed dead. But I hadn't realised he was one of yours. What was he like?'

Green pursed his lips as he thought about this for a moment. 'Young. Twenties. A bit on the nervous side. But I liked him. He had a sense of humour.'

'Were you running him for long?'

‘No, actually. Somehow that makes it even worse. So, you see, I’m personally invested in this.’

When they finished their drinks, Green suggested another round. O’Rourke was very tempted, but she was on early shift the next day.

Before she could change her mind, she asked, ‘Another rain-check?’

Green smiled. ‘Okay. Another rain-check.’

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O’Rourke floated Green’s idea with O’Connell. He was about as enthusiastic as she’d expected.

‘Hail Mary is right. We ain’t that desperate.’

‘Aren’t we? We’re no closer to catching Masterton meeting or messaging a contact. Meanwhile, another asset disappears down the steps of the Lubyanka. I hear that we’ve hardly got any left in Moscow.’

‘Where’d you hear that?’ He waved a hand. ‘Doesn’t matter. You’re right, we *are* desperate. But it’s too risky. Look at the neighbourhood. Older, middle-class residents, shit-scared of being burgled – even though they never are – so, continually on the lookout for anything out of the ordinary. Hell, I bet they’ve got a top-notch neighbourhood watch scheme going on there.’

‘As it happens, they do.’

‘Well, then.’

‘But it’s worth a go, Eddie. We’ll do due diligence, you know, scout the area at night, see if it’s feasible.’

O’Connell drummed his fingers on the table, and looked at her long and hard. ‘Okay. Do a night-time walk-through. Best not use McCain, though.’

She was genuinely puzzled. ‘Why not?’

‘How many black residents you seen in Gulf Branch?’

‘Oh.’

‘And do a proper rehearsal. Practise it, get the timings off pat, all that shit. Okay?’

So, they did. One good thing was that garbage, once it had been put out on the street for collection, was no longer regarded as private property, and was therefore fair game. The problem, though, was to intercept the Mastertons’ trash before it was hauled away on a Thursday morning, without alerting them, or their neighbours, to

their presence. The agents in the rented house were provided with a dog, and one of them was sent out to walk it on a couple of Wednesday nights, just to test the water. He reported back that the area was very quiet, the sidewalks deserted, hardly any traffic. McCain and O'Rourke were assigned to the detail – much to his disgust, though she could hardly complain, given that it was her idea – along with two other agents, Ricardo González from the DC Office and Aaron Saltwich from the North Virginia Office, and a driver just known, worryingly, as 'Piquet'. The operation was to be based at the field office at Tysons Corner, a fact which made O'Rourke smile wryly, recalling Gordon's cavalier dismissal of the location. She and McCain drove the route a couple of times and agreed it would be no more than a ten-minute drive from North Utah Street when the traffic was light, as it would be when the trash was kidnapped.

With O'Connell's instructions ringing in her ears, O'Rourke arranged a practice session in the basement garage at Tysons Corner. Apart from anything else, the session would tell them how long the operation would take. She got hold of a couple of trash containers, exact replicas of the one the Mastertons used, and the team filled them both with newspaper, cardboard, empty tin cans, and so on. One, standing in for the target container, was positioned in the basement garage; the dummy replacement was loaded into an unmarked black van, equipped with sliding doors, with the four agents climbing in the back. Piquet took them on a brief tour round the garage, before driving up to the target container. Even before the van had completely come to a halt, he shouted 'Go!' and González and Saltwich slid open the door, and jumped out, toting the dummy replacement. McCain and O'Rourke followed fast on their heels, grabbing the target container and hauling it into the van. Meanwhile the other two agents replaced it with the dummy. After half a dozen practice runs, they got the time it took for the four of them to be back in the van, with the target container on board, and the van rolling, down to eleven seconds. O'Connell was impressed, and gave them the go-ahead, at least for a few weeks.

Hence, the next Wednesday night, just after midnight, the four agents, together with the replacement dummy container, were driven from Tysons Corner towards North Utah Street. They were in radio contact with the dog-walking agent, who would give them the all-clear. But just as they had turned off Glebe Road, onto North Dittmar Road, heading for Thirty-Fifth Street North and the Mastertons', the radio crackled.

‘Incoming,’ said a slightly fuzzy voice. There’s a jogger. She’s moving down the street southwards. Over.’

They passed her as they turned into North Utah Street, the reflective stripes on her Lycra jogging pants catching in their headlights. She paid them no attention. They were all dressed the same, in dark clothes and watchcaps, and were ready, as soon as the van slowed to a stop, to jump out and swap the Mastertons’ trash for the replacement dummy. They made the switch before the van had stopped rolling.

‘Twelve seconds,’ said Piquet. ‘You guys are slipping.’

He kept to a moderate speed until they reached Glebe Road, whereupon he put his foot down and with virtually no traffic about, they arrived at Tysons Corner in under ten minutes. They quickly hauled the trash container inside, taking it to a room they had emptied, and tipped out the contents onto trestle tables standing on a tarpaulin they’d rolled out beforehand. There were four other agents there to speed up the process of rooting through the garbage. All put on overalls and surgical gloves, though the Mastertons’ garbage wasn’t as disgusting as O’Rourke had feared. Still pretty disgusting though. There were used diapers, and a lot of takeout food boxes. It didn’t look like either Mitch or Rosalita was a dedicated home cook. Apart from the other detritus that might have been expected in anybody’s trash, there were particularly large quantities of cigarette butts and empty booze bottles. It all gave O’Rourke an insight into the Mastertons’ lifestyle. But there were no incriminating documents of any kind. Two hours later, they’d put the trash can back in place.

O’Rourke knew they needed to find something in the next few weeks, before O’Connell pulled the plug, and the team nearly missed it. It was the fourth run, and she for one was ready to give up for the night, when Saltwich let out a cry.

‘Hey! I might have got something here.’

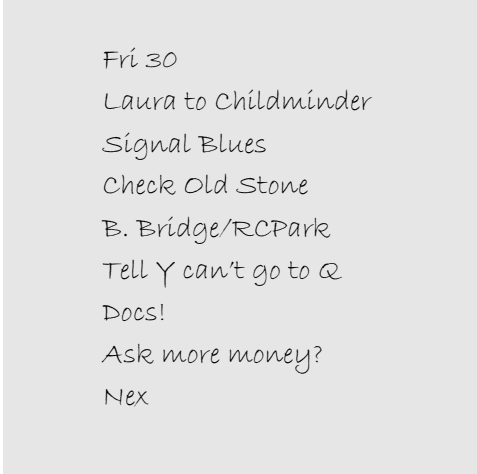
He held out a fragment of crumpled lined paper, which he had smoothed out to show the single word ‘Signal’ in hand-written block letters.

‘Looks like part of a page from a notepad,’ said McCain. ‘Shit. We’ll have to go through the trash again.’

That was a risk. They had to get the Mastertons’ container back while it was still dark, before their neighbours started to get up.

‘Right,’ O’Rourke said. ‘Let’s get to it.’

It was worth the effort. They found several scraps of lined paper. Put together, they made up a page from a spiral note pad that had been torn up and thrown away. There was a piece missing, but it looked as if Masterton had been doodling some notes to himself:



Fri 30  
Laura to Childminder  
Signal Blues  
Check Old Stone  
B. Bridge/RCPark  
Tell Y can't go to @  
Docs!  
Ask more money?  
Nex

‘Do you believe it?’ asked McCain. ‘Could he really be that stupid, really be so sloppy?’

O’Rourke remembered about what Green had said, about Masterton being naturally slapdash, or believing himself invulnerable, or both.

‘Yes, Chester,’ she said, ‘he could. ‘You’ve seen his record. His career is littered with fuck-ups and yet he considers himself superior to the rest of us. I believe he thinks he can’t be caught.’

‘Either way,’ said González, ‘we need to get the trashcan back where it belongs, and get this note to O’Connell, asap.’

After they took the Mastertons’ trash container back and retrieved the replacement, without apparently attracting any attention, they drove out of Arlington, across the George Mason and Francis Case Memorial bridges, then onto the Dwight D. Eisenhower Freeway towards the Point. O’Connell had been called, getting him out of bed, and he met them there. The team assembled in his office and showed him the notepad page, now stuck together with scotch tape.

‘That’s it?’ he asked.

‘Yep,’ said McCain. ‘That’s all there is.’

O'Connell read it again and nodded his head. 'It's enough. If it's real. Is it?'

O'Rourke rehearsed the argument they'd had about its authenticity when they found it. O'Connell listened, then paced around for a few moments.

'Okay,' he said. 'We gotta take the risk. Let's assume it is the real thing. Decode it for me.'

'Well,' said McCain, 'we think Q is for Quito.'

'Yeah,' O'Rourke said. 'We reckon Masterton travels there with Rosalita on the pretext of visiting her mother, but actually slips away to meet his handler. For some reason, he's decided he can't make it this time.'

'Maybe he suspects he's under surveillance,' suggested O'Connell.

'Possibly,' O'Rourke said, 'but I doubt it. I believe he still thinks he's gotten away with it.'

'Okay,' said O'Connell. 'Now, who's this "Y"?' '

'No way to know,' said O'Rourke. 'Best guess is that he's Masterton's handler, almost certainly a KGB officer operating out of the Russian Embassy.'

O'Connell thought about this for a moment. 'The question is, what do we do about it? Do we increase the surveillance on the Reds?'

All known or suspected KGB and GRU officers were subject to routine surveillance. But it really *was* routine; any operative worth his or her salt could shake it with rudimentary countersurveillance measures.

'Do we have the manpower?' asked McCain. 'We don't want to pull people off surveillance of Masterton, do we?'

'It would only be for a couple days, though,' said González. 'I mean, the date on the note is Friday.'

'Which is actually tomorrow,' O'Rourke said.

'So it is,' said O'Connell. 'Even so. Let's concentrate all our resources on Masterton. What's next?'

'I think it's straightforward,' O'Rourke said. 'Tomorrow, Masterton is going to take his daughter to the childminder, then drive into Georgetown, like he did a few weeks back, leave a signal chalk mark somewhere near Blues Alley, then check to see if there's a chalk mark at Old Stone, though I don't know what that is ...'



‘Must be the Old Stone House,’ said McCain. ‘It’s a museum on M Street and Jefferson. Not far from Blues Alley.’

‘Okay. Then, he goes off to the dead-drop site which I guess is under a bridge in RC Park, which has to be Rock Creek Park, don’t it?’

‘You’d think,’ said O’Connell. He got up and went over to a bookcase, from where he pulled out a map of the city. He created some space on his desk, unfolded the map to show northern Washington and laid it out. ‘Okay, look here.’ He stabbed a finger at Georgetown. ‘He comes off the Key Bridge onto M Street, then it’s only a few hundred yards to the Blues Alley site, which is only a stone’s throw from the Old Stone House, no pun intended, then he carries on to Rock Creek Parkway until he reaches the park, now he’s on Beach Drive North West, and, well, there you go, he’s reached Boulder Bridge.’

‘B. Bridge!’ said Saltwich.

‘Seems likely,’ said O’Connell.

‘What’s it like?’ O’Rourke asked. ‘Haven’t got round to hiking the Valley Trail yet.’

‘Can’t say I’m surprised,’ said McCain.’ Had you down as a slacker from the get-go.’ O’Rourke shot him the bird.

McCain carried on, regardless. ‘Anyway, it’s perfect. It’s an old, low, stone bridge. You can walk down from the road and there’s a kind of pebble beach alongside the creek. You could leave a package there and it couldn’t be seen from the road, or even the beach if you didn’t know to look.’

They all stood there in silence for a moment, taking this in. O’Connell scratched the back of his neck. ‘Listen up. We’re gonna let Masterton take his daughter to the childminder unmolested. We ain’t gonna take any risks that he might spot us. We can’t blow it, not now we’re so close. I want eyes at Blues Alley and the Old Stone House, and I want teams north and south of that bridge. But let’s not take any chances. I want a full-court press, blanket coverage of that park. I mean tighter than a racoon’s ass. Understand?’

There were nods and murmurs of assent. O’Rourke knew it was a risk. What if they’d misread the page from the notepad? Or Masterton had changed his mind? Or they were being played? Well, they would know soon enough.

## Chapter Nineteen

*Washington DC, September-October 1983*

For once, O'Rourke did not get a good night's sleep. Normally, once she'd turned off her bedside lamp and her head hit the pillow, she would sleep the sleep of the righteous until the squawk of her alarm shook her awake. This time, the potential magnitude of the next day's events kept her tossing and turning through the night. So, at six o'clock on the morning of Friday September 30, with an hour still to go before sunrise, she found herself yawning as she sat next to McCain in their car in Rock Creek Park. He grinned at her and was about to say something, but she silenced him with a look. Both were dressed in camouflage pants, jackets and forage caps. They'd parked on the hard surface by a picnic site, a streetlamp providing a weak glow. The site was north of Boulder Bridge and out of sight of it, as Beach Drive looped round to the south, cutting a trail through the densely wooded parkland.

Theirs was possibly the most important position in the operation, but O'Rourke knew they were just one unit in O'Connell's 'full-court press'. There were agents on foot, got up as street cleaners, trash collectors, postal workers, down-and-outs, joggers, hikers, park rangers, and what have you. They were stationed near Laura's childminder in Donaldson Run, at Blues Alley and the Old Stone House, and in Rock Creek Park. Not too many at each site: it was early in the morning and they didn't want to spook Masterton. Apart from McCain and O'Rourke, there were mobile units at various points on Military Road and Lee Highway, along the route he would be expected to take from the childminder's to the Key Bridge, then on M Street, Rock Creek Parkway, and the roads in and out of the park. O'Connell had insisted on absolute radio silence, other than to check in when in position, or to report a sighting of the target.

The two agents were well supplied with coffee, and in McCain's case, with a takeout from Dunkin' Donuts.

'Sure you won't have one?' he asked. 'These custard ones are to die for.'

'Literally, by the look of them,' O'Rourke said. 'I'll pass.'

'Your loss.'

They sat in silence for a while. For O'Rourke, this was the worst part of the job. The mind-numbing boredom of surveillance. Bum-numbing, too. Then McCain started counting.

'One ... two ... three, four, five ...'

'Jesus, Chester, what the fuck are you doing?'

'Counting squirrels. Seven ...'

'Chester!'

'All right, all right. But I just hope Eddie knows what the fuck he's doing. Dammit! We shouldn't be here. We should be there, in Arlington, following Masterton, sorry, RACOON.'

'RACOON' was the codename they'd all agreed on for Masterton on that day, a little joke which O'Connell was happy to play along with. Well, he didn't veto it, anyway.

'You're just getting ansty,' O'Rourke said. 'You know Eddie's right. This could be our big shot. It's worth the risk.'

They didn't have too long to wait before the radio crackled into life. It was just after seven, the sun having risen, sending long fingers of light through the trees. One of the agents living in the rental house on Thirty-Fifth Street, jogging up and down North Utah Street, reported in.

'RACOON is on the move. Repeat: RACOON is on the move. Over.'

O'Connell responded. 'Copy that. Listen up. Everyone get your head out of your ass and be ready. Let's nail this fucker.'

From then on, the airwaves buzzed as spotters reported in along Masterton's route. He was tracked to the childminder and back onto Military Road. He was heading south, apparently en route to the Key Bridge, just as they hoped. The radio came to life as the teams following him reported in. Then there was silence, followed by a cacophony of voices.

'Alpha five. Do you have eyes? Over.'

'No. What about you, three?'

'No. Where the fuck is he?'

'Two? Four? Anything?'

'No—'

O'Connell's bark filled the airwaves

'What's happening? Tell me you haven't lost him.' Another silence. 'Speak to me. Someone. What the fuck—'

‘Sorry, boss. Alpha One here. We did lose him for a moment, but we’ve got him again. Would you believe the fucker stopped for a doughnut? Over.’

O’Rourke looked at McCain, who shrugged. ‘Custard, betcha.’

The chatter on the radio continued as Masterton was tracked along M street, until he reached Blues Alley.

‘This is Delta One. He’s slowing down. Repeat, RACOON is slowing down. He’s stopping. Over.’

‘This is Delta Three. I have eyes. He’s parking, getting out of the car. I’ve got him. Everyone else stay frosty. There he goes. He’s looking round, but casually. Don’t seem in any hurry. Okay, he’s stopped at a mailbox. He’s leaving a chalk mark. I’ve got him on camera! I’ve got him!’

McCain and O’Rourke exchanged a high five.

‘He’s gotten back in the car and is moving off. Over to you, Gamma One.’

‘This is Gamma One. We have eyes. He’s approaching the Old Stone House. Gamma Two?’

‘Yep. I see him. He’s slowing down ... but he’s not stopping. He’s moving on. Over.’

It was only a few hundred yards to the turn onto Rock Creek Parkway, but everyone held their breath until the report came through that RACOON was indeed heading towards the park.

‘Time to get ready, Chester,’ O’Rourke said.

They got out of the car and opened the boot, McCain scooping up a camera with a telescopic lens, and checking it over. O’Rourke collected a pair of binoculars and took charge of the radio.

‘Okay,’ McCain said, ‘let’s go.’

They crossed the road and set off through the trees, until they reached a hiking pathway, waymarked as the Valley Trail.

‘Well,’ said McCain, ‘guess I was just plumb wrong. Here you are, hiking the trail, after all. Boo-yah!’

The trail, such as it was, was only two feet or so wide, and littered with roots and rocks. O’Rourke half-tripped or stubbed her toe more than once.

‘Withhold my compliments to the trailblazer,’ she moaned.

It was probably no more than a couple of hundred yards to Boulder Bridge as the crow flew, but the trail twisted and turned through the woodland. O'Rourke took time to study the bridge. It certainly lived up to its name. The bridge was maybe eighty feet long, but no more than ten or twelve feet in height at its apex. Large boulders, placed roughly vertically, formed the lower part of the arch's span, with smaller stones and rocks above, set horizontally. Once they reached the bridge, they scouted around for a place to set up, where they would have a good view of it, but be out of sight. Finding a spot just north of the bridge, where they could hunker down, hidden by overhanging branches, they settled down to wait. McCain seemed entirely calm, but O'Rourke knew he was just as hyped-up as she was. This was it! They were finally going to nail the fucker!

Maybe McCain sensed the tension O'Rourke was feeling. 'Mel,' he said, feigning insouciance, 'I've been meaning to ask you. Have you arranged another date with Michael Green, yet?'

'Date?' she spluttered. 'It wasn't a date. We just ...' She could see the big grin on McCain's face. 'All right, smartass. You got me.'

The radio continued to chatter. Then, a fresh voice came on. 'This is Sigma One. RACOON approaching Blagden Avenue. Repeat: RACOON approaching Blagden Avenue. Over.'

O'Rourke jumped in. 'This is Omega One. Copy that. Radio silence from now on. Repeat: radio silence from now on. Out.'

She put the binoculars up to her eyes and adjusted the sights. Blagden Avenue was less than half a mile from the bridge, and she could see the car approaching, big enough in the high-powered lenses that it seemed that if she stretched out her arm, she'd be able to touch it. She touched McCain on the arm. He nodded. Now, he could see it too. Instinctively, they scrunched down a little further in their hideout. Masterton's Pontiac Firebird slowed down as it reached the bridge, then turned off the road onto the grass verge. Masterton emerged, looking around, but with no hint of fear or anxiety. He opened the boot and pulled out a package, about the size of a thick hard-back book. Without hurrying, he clambered down to the pebble beach that ran beneath the bridge. Crouching down, he positioned the package under the arch, as far back in the shadows as it would go. Next to O'Rourke, McCain took shot after shot with

the long-range camera. Masterton stood up, and, apparently satisfied that the package was sufficiently concealed, climbed back up to the roadway. He got back in his car, executed a swift three-point turn, and drove away.

O'Rourke switched on the radio. 'This is Omega One. The Eagle has landed. Repeat: The Eagle has landed.'

As she and McCain made their way down to the bridge to retrieve the package, they could hear whoops and hollers over the airways. O'Connell's voice came on.

'Okay, people. Let's wrap this up. Well done, everyone. Delta team, stay in place. Kappa team, take over from Omega.'

That had been the subject of much discussion. The plan was to copy the material in the package as quickly as possible, and unless it contained material that represented an immediate risk to one or more of their assets, put it back. Then they could maintain surveillance and potentially catch RACOON's handler, 'Y', red-handed.

McCain and O'Rourke took the package back to the car. The outer wrapping was part of a black bin-bag swathed in duct tape. Inside, was a cardboard box, containing half a dozen film canisters, and a typewritten text.

'Unless these are home movies,' said McCain, 'then I'm betting this is game, set and match.'

\*

They were not home movies. O'Rourke was sitting at the table in O'Connell's office at the Point along with McCain, O'Connell himself, who'd had the films developed in double-quick time, and Catherine Gordon, whom he'd brought in to review the material. They were passing back and forth the developed prints, all of which contained documents of one kind or another.

'What exactly have we got here, Catherine?' asked O'Rourke.

'Basically,' she said, 'classified documents.' She held up some of the prints. 'These are all internal memos and position papers. This one, for example, sets out the Agency's assessment of the Warsaw Pact's readiness for war.'

'What about these?' asked McCain. 'These look more technical.' He passed some prints over to Gordon.

'They are,' she said. She turned them round in her hands. 'They're specs – specifications of military hardware of varying kinds.'

Meanwhile, O'Rourke had snagged a document from the pile and was shaking her head as she read it.

'Fuck! she said. 'Look at this.'

'What is it?' asked O'Connell, getting up and moving round to look over her shoulder.'

'It's a summary,' said O'Rourke, 'of the product of an SIS asset codenamed PELICAN.'

'PELICAN?' said Gordon. 'That's a famous name at the Agency. The intel the Brits shared with us was reckoned to be top of the range. Gold dust, even. As I remember it, PELICAN was the codename for two agents, one Russian, the other Polish, or Czech.'

'Well,' said O'Rourke, 'that's as maybe. But someone, presumably Masterton, has added a handwritten note to the summary.' She passed the document around. 'Look what it says.'

The note confirmed, as McCain had inferred, that Masterton wasn't going to go to Quito, as previously planned, and included a detailed justification for a pay rise. But the killer was the final line:

*PELICAN is a Czecho army colonel, named Pavel Souček.*

M

'Fuck,' said McCain. 'We can't put the package back under the bridge. It's a death sentence for PELICAN.'

Gordon shook her head. 'No, Chester, you don't need to worry. I have it on the best authority that Pavel Souček is alive and well and living somewhere salubrious in the UK. I think this is an example of Masterton stumbling on some intel too late to do any damage.'

O'Rourke smiled to herself. Surely this was the asset that Michael Green had spirited out of Czechoslovakia.

'Thank God for that,' said McCain, 'but now we have direct evidence that Masterton has been betraying our assets. Sure, we assumed it. But now we know it for a fact. He's even initialled it.'

O'Connell slapped the table. 'That's it. We've got the son of a bitch.'

'Okay,' said O'Rourke, 'but what do we do next?'

What they did next was assemble a council of war. It met in Bertram Malloy's office and as well as McCain, O'Rourke, Gordon and O'Connell, in attendance were Eugene McKenna and Paul Bettinelli, senior FBI officers from the Washington and North Virginia offices respectively, Robert Olsson, Michael Green, and the key figure in the process, Alice Sörenson, from the Justice Department. It would be for her to decide whether, when and against whom arrest warrants should be applied for. O'Connell, Olsson and Gordon laid out the case against Masterton and Rosalita. First, Gordon and Olsson went through the stages of the RACETRACK investigation that had promoted Masterton to the position of prime suspect: his access to crucial information, his financial records, the result of O'Rourke's research in Quito, the intel from PELICAN about COSSACK's Latina lover, his interview and subsequent polygraph test. Then, O'Connell outlined the steps taken by the FBI, including the phone taps, surveillance, and trash dive, culminating in the discovery of the page from the notepad and the subsequent RACOON operation. O'Connell used a whiteboard to pin up photos of Masterton at the Blues Alley signal site and the Boulder Bridge, the partly redacted summary of PELICAN's product, and the note from the package.

Sörenson, who had been furiously taking notes in a leather-bound organiser notepad, leaned back in her chair and pointed her Montblanc rollerball at Malloy.

'From the Department's point of view, I guess there are two questions here. Have you got enough to justify the issuing of warrants, and even if you have, do you actually want to serve them right now?

There were murmurs and nods of agreement around the room.

'As to the first,' continued Sörenson, 'there's more than enough evidence to bring an indictment against Mitchell Masterton. In fact, if I wasn't a very cautious attorney, I might say you have him dead to rights.' A tiny smile appeared at the corners of her mouth. It disappeared almost at once. 'But I'm not seeing much on the table to enable me to persuade a judge to issue me a warrant for Rosalita. Help me out here.'

The rest of them looked at each other. Finally, O'Connell spoke.

'We need to arrest Rosalita too. Look, does anyone here believe that she didn't know what her darling Mitch was up to? That she believed that cockamamie story about helping a pal out with his investments? Give me a break. More to the point, if we arrest Rosalita, we can use that as leverage to get Masterton to cooperate.'



More murmurs and nods of agreement around the room.

'I take your point, Eddie, I really do,' said Sörenson.

'But ...'

'But I can't ask for a warrant just because it would be convenient for the FBI. I need sufficient grounds to do so. I've got to be able to persuade a judge.'

Bertram Malloy weighed in. 'We understand that, Alice. But there are grounds. The evidence may be circumstantial, but it's there.'

Sörenson pursed her lips, and tapped her pen on the table. She had another look at the papers and photographs on the table. Then she shook her head. 'All right. I may live to regret this, but I'll do it. Let's hope I find the right judge in the right mood. The second question, then, is when do you want me to do it?'

Malloy gestured for O'Connell to speak.

'I'm tempted to say that we should pick up the traitorous bastard right now and throw his ass in jail, but I don't want to fuck this up by going off half-cock.'

'And,' O'Rourke said, 'I think we should let the day play out, see which mouse comes to claim the cheese from our trap at Boulder Bridge.'

'I agree,' said Malloy. 'And, as Eddie said, we need to do this right, absolutely by the book. That will take a little time to organise.'

'Tomorrow, then?' asked Bettinelli.

'Hang on,' said McKenna, 'shouldn't we consider if there's any counterintelligence gains to be made by leaving him out in the field. I mean we know now where his dead drop is.'

Gordon was shaking her head. 'In the first place, there's no guarantee that he'll continue to use the same site. In fact, even if his own tradecraft is shoddy—'

'Which it is,' said O'Connell.

'Well, the KGB's tradecraft won't be. Sure, you can keep up the surveillance on him and find out where any new dead-drop site is, but that's the second thing. The longer you stay on him, the greater the chance he'll become aware of it and make a run for it. Thirdly, do we really want to take the risk of him pointing the finger at more of our assets? Do we?'

There was a brief silence, before Malloy took control again. 'Catherine's right, we need to get the son of a bitch in custody as soon as. Eddie, do we know what he's planning to do tomorrow, given it's a Saturday?'

O'Connell turned towards McKenna. 'Gene, you've been monitoring the phone taps. Anything there to help us?'

McKenna took a slim notebook out of his suit jacket pocket, and flipped over a few pages. 'Sure. We got him talking to his sister over in Fredericksburg. They're all going over tomorrow to visit.'

'Sunday?' O'Connell asked.

'Nada, as far as we know.'

'Sunday it is then,' said Malloy. 'That'll give us time to get set up, get all our ducks in a row.'

'One thing, though,' said O'Connell. 'I don't want to let the Mastertons have even a minute together to get their stories straight. We need to find a way to get him out of the house, so we can arrest them separately.'

'Any suggestions,' said Malloy.

'Yes,' said Olsson, after a short pause. 'Let's get his boss, Benton Adams, to phone him on Sunday morning, early, and tell him he needs to go in to Langley for some urgent business or other.'

'Do we trust him?' said O'Rourke.

'Adams?' said Olsson.

'Yes. We'd have to give him a reason for calling Masterton in. If we tell him the truth, are we sure he wouldn't give his buddy a heads-up, even if was only a hint?'

'He'd be sticking his tit in the wringer if he did, wouldn't he?' said O'Connell.

'Maybe, but why take the risk?'

'Do you have a better idea?' said Malloy.

'I do,' said Green. 'Catherine, I assume you keep your boss, Phillips Baxter in the loop?'

'Of course.'

'Well, then. Why not get him to contact Adams and Masterton early on Sunday and say he wants to see both of them in his office urgently. Make it seem that Phillips Baxter needs their help. If necessary, he can explain to Adams after the event.'

‘That would work,’ said Gordon. ‘But the line of communication would be from his PA to Adams, who’d contact Masterton in turn.’

‘Perfect,’ said Malloy. ‘Catherine, can I leave you to organise it?’

‘Sure.’

‘Where are we going to grab him up?’ O’Rourke asked. ‘Langley? En route?’

Malloy thought about that for a few moments. ‘Close your ears, Alice,’ he said. ‘Let’s make sure he’s arrested in Virginia. In my experience we get a better shake from the judges in Alexandria, than we get here in DC.’ He turned towards Bettinelli. ‘So, Paul, that means you should be the arresting officer. Liaise with Eddie. Make sure the operation goes off without a hitch.’

\*

O’Rourke, and the rest of the NIGHTOWL team, save for Eddie O’Connell, who remained at the Point command centre to handle the communications, assembled at seven the next morning, Sunday 2 October, in the parking lot of a Roy Rogers restaurant near the FBI’s North Virginia Field Office at Tysons Corner. One group, led by Gene McKenna, was detailed to travel to Langley to do another search of Masterton’s office; a second, with Cooper Jefferson from the North Virginia office in charge, would arrest Rosalita and search the house. Four cars would take seventeen agents to arrest Masterton. As per Bertram Malloy’s orders, Paul Bettinelli would do the honours. At seven-thirty, the four cars moved off. Two of the cars, one full with five agents, the other with an empty back seat, headed for a Safeway on Military Road. The other two, with five agents in each, including Bettinelli, McCain and O’Rourke in the lead car, drove to North Thomas Street, south of 35<sup>th</sup> Street, between North Utah Street and Military Road.

They waited. After a while, it was obvious that they were attracting the attention of the local residents. Ricardo González got out of the second car, showed his identity card around, and explained that they were on a ‘training exercise’. They waited some more. At nine o’clock, Bettinelli got on the radio to O’Connell.

‘What the fuck, Eddie? We should have heard something by now.’

‘Hold your horses, Pauly. Adams has been given the word. He’s gonna call Masterton.’

‘This counts for *early* in his eyes?’

‘Give him a break, whydontcha? It is a goddam Sunday.’

Fifteen minutes later, O’Connell came back on.

‘All units. Adams has spoken to RACOON. On the move in fifteen. Repeat: on the move in fifteen. Stand by.’

Some of the agents had got out of the cars, to stretch their legs or have a smoke. They all piled back in, ready to go.

‘Come on,’ said McCain. ‘Come on.’

‘Stay cool, Chester,’ O’Rourke said. ‘It’s happening.’

The radio spluttered into life again. ‘This is WILDCAT.’ WILDCAT was one of the agents sequestered in the rental house. Their dog must have been the most exercised in history. ‘RACOON is on the move. Repeat: RACOON is on the move. Over.’

O’Connell’s voice boomed. ‘All units: GO! Repeat: GO! Get the fucker!’

From their vantage point on North Thomas Street, the agents could see Masterton’s Pontiac Firebird pass by. They set off, turning right onto 35<sup>th</sup> Street, falling in behind him. They didn’t need to get too close: they knew where he was going. As the little convoy approached Military Road, the agents could see up ahead the other team of two cars, slewed across the road, bumper to bumper. Masterton was forced to stop, honking his horn as he did so. Bettinelli’s team of two cars pulled up behind him, lights flashing. Four agents got out of each, leaving just the drivers inside. They all pulled out their weapons, apart from Bettinelli, who approached the driver’s side of the Firebird and knocked on the window. Masterton wound it down, spoke to Bettinelli, then got out. Bettinelli cuffed him and led him to the car on the corner of Military Road with the empty backseat. He pushed Masterton in, and got in beside him. O’Rourke got in the other side. They drove off towards Tysons Corner.

O’Rourke felt as if a great weight had fallen from her shoulders. They had captured COSSACK.

## Chapter Twenty

*Washington DC, October 1983*

For O'Rourke and the other members of the RACETRACK task force, the arrest of Mitchell Masterton and his wife, Rosalita was just reward for their efforts. It had taken hours and hours of hard, detailed work, some smart investigation, a little bit of luck, and Masterton's unique combination of arrogance and incompetence to bring him down. However, there was still work to be done. The two suspects needed to be interviewed, Masterton by O'Rourke and Paul Bettinelli, Rosalita by McCain and Cooper Jefferson. So it was, that at two o'clock on the Sunday of the arrest, a group assembled in Interview Suite One, in the FBI's offices at Tysons Corner. Squashed into the observation room were Green, Gordon, Olsson, Eddie O'Connell, Gene McKenna, Bertram Malloy, Joseph P. O'Shaughnessy and Martin Beckenhof. Rosalita was being interrogated in Suite Two, but this was where the real action was. Two FBI agents brought Masterton into the interview room, which measured about twenty feet by fifteen, and removed his handcuffs. They deposited him on a single chair to one side of a small table, with two chairs on the other. There was a movie camera on a tripod in one corner, and microphones hung down from the ceiling. A one-way window ran most of the length of one of the longer sides, through which observers could see what was happening.

Masterton was still dressed in his own clothes, namely the suit and tie he'd donned to go in to Langley. To O'Rourke's eyes he looked a little worse for wear after a few hours in a cell, but otherwise seemed his normal assured self. While she fiddled with the camera, Bettinelli began by reading Masterton his rights. He then offered him a written version, asking if he was prepared to sign a waiver, refusing legal representation.

Masterton smiled. 'Well, I might. What have I got to hide? But can I have a cigarette, first? And how about a cup of coffee?'

Bettinelli opened his arms. 'Sorry, Mitch – Hey! Is it okay if I call you Mitch?'

'Sure.'

'Good, good. But I'm afraid there's no smoking in here. Maybe we'll take a break, later.'

'Coffee?'

'Oh sure. That can be arranged.'

Masterton took the pen offered him by O'Rourke, signed the papers in front of him, and slid them across the table to Bettinelli.

'Right, then,' said Bettinelli. 'Before we go any further, I just want to remind you of why you're here. Repeat what you've already been told, okay?'

Masterton nodded.

'Mitch, you're under arrest for espionage. So is your wife.'

Masterton, who up until that point had looked relaxed, almost as if he were enjoying himself, sat upright in his chair. 'But she—'

Bettinelli quietened him with the wave of a hand. 'We know what you've been doing. We know how long you've been doing it. And we know who you've been doing it for.'

'Is that a fact?' said Masterton. He smiled. 'Then why I am I here, if you know everything? Get what I'm saying?'

Bettinelli smiled back, though O'Rourke thought there didn't seem to be any humour in it. 'Not everything, Mitch, not everything. What we don't know is why. Why did you do it?'

Masterton shook his head. 'I'm gonna have to disagree with you there, er, Paul. I don't know what you think you know, but you got the wrong man, that's for sure.'

There was a knock at the door, and an assistant came in with a tray of coffee and there was a pause as she distributed it, along with milk, cream and sugar. Masterton blew on his cup, took a sip and nodded appreciatively. 'Hey! This is way better than what we get at Langley. Way better.'

'Glad to hear it,' said Bettinelli. 'Right now, Supervisory Special Agent O'Rourke is going to take over. Mel?'

'Wow!' exclaimed Masterton. '*Supervisory* Special Agent. Way to go, hon! Can I take any credit for your promotion? I'd sure like to think so.'

O'Rourke's face remained impassive as she sorted through the papers in front of her until she found the document she needed. 'Okay, Mitch. First of all, let's talk about the money.'

'Sure. Whatever you say.'

'You paid for your house in Arlington with cash, somewhere around half a million dollars, right?' She didn't wait for a response. 'And that doesn't include all the work

you had done to it. Then there's the brand-new Pontiac Firebird. Not much change out of twenty-five thousand bucks, I reckon. Add on all the foreign trips you've taken, to Quito for example. No way you could afford all that on your Agency salary.'

She turned over a page. 'We searched your house today. Top-of-the-range hi-fi gear, expensive camera, a couple signed Rothko prints, home cinema set-up, enough jewellery to stock Tiffany's. Not to mention what we found in your wife's closet. Dozens of dresses. Gucci, Dior, what have you. And the shoes! Hundreds of pairs. Some kinda Imelda Marcos complex going on there? I could go on.'

Masterton shrugged. 'I explained all this when I had my polygraph test. We were lucky. Rosie had a favourite uncle who died and left her a bundle. If she wanted to spend some of it on shoes, then that was okay by me. Get what I'm saying?'

'Not really,' said O'Rourke. 'See, here's the thing. I took a little trip down to Quito, and had a long chat with the bank manager who oversaw your wife's uncle's affairs. Speaks real good English, did you know that? And he told me that there was no way Rosalita's inheritance could have financed your lifestyle. No way in the world.' She sat back in her chair. 'Care to comment?'

O'Rourke had watched Masterton carefully when she mentioned going down to Quito, and was gratified to see he had visibly blanched. In fact, he looked genuinely shocked. But he quickly pulled himself together.

He spread his hands. 'Okay,' he said. 'I'll come clean.'

Bettinelli, who had been scrutinising Masterton throughout his exchange with O'Rourke, sat up even straighter in his chair. In the observation room there was a palpable air of anticipation.

'Look,' said Masterton, 'the fact is, I made a pile of money – I mean, a pile! – through some investments I was involved in with an old buddy of mine. It's as simple as that.'

'Is it?' said O'Rourke. 'Then why didn't you say so in your polygraph test? Why make up the lame-assed story about the favourite uncle? And what's the name of this old buddy of yours?'

Masterton put on a simpering grin, and O'Rourke thought she saw a little wink.

‘Aw, well, you see, some of those investments were a bit, you know ...’ He waggled a hand. ‘Maybe a hint of insider trading, get what I’m saying? Wouldn’t want to get my old buddy in any trouble, would I?’

In the observation room, Green and Gordon exchanged glances.

‘Way to go Mitch!’ said Olsson. ‘Great performance.’

‘Remember,’ said Gordon, ‘He was active in amateur dramatics at MIT.’

O’Rourke sat and stared at Masterton for a long moment, then shook her head. ‘I’m sure we could work out some kind of immunity deal, if it came to it. But let’s move on, shall we?’

Olsson was getting agitated. ‘She’s not buying that load of b.s. is she? Shady investments, my ass. Why hasn’t she nailed him on it?’

‘Calm down, Robert,’ said Gordon. ‘She will. My guess is she’ll circle back to it. Right now, she’s got him feeling pleased with himself. He thinks he’s put one over on her. Watch and learn, Robert, watch and learn.’

O’Rourke had been delving into her briefcase and produced a manilla envelope, which she laid on the table. ‘We found some other stuff in your house too. In your closet. Bit of a surprise, really. Not the sort of stuff you’d expect an experienced intelligence officer to leave lying around, would you, Paul?’

‘You wouldn’t,’ agreed Bettinelli. ‘Unless he were an incompetent fool, of course. Or, maybe just a tad arrogant.’

O’Rourke opened the envelope and tipped out the contents. ‘Let’s see. These are interesting. Transfer records for banks in Switzerland. Had to get my calculator out. One million seven hundred thousand, two hundred sixty-two dollars. Wow! Those investments really paid off, eh, Mitch?’

‘What can I say? We had a bit of luck.’

O’Rourke continued to rummage through the documents from the envelope. ‘Here’s a letter, apparently from the KGB. I can see why you kept it. Must have been wonderful to feel so appreciated. They couldn’t have been more grateful for your work, could they? Look, there’s a description of a beautiful dacha in the woods by a river. Was that to be your retirement home, Mitch? What, nothing to say?’

‘Now, this you’ll have to help me with. Sure looks like your handwriting.’ O’Rourke reached across the table, turning around a page torn from a notepad, in a plastic



sleeve, so that Masterton could read it. She tapped her teeth with a pencil, then used it to point to the entries on the page. 'See here, "BS at DOP/DD. MB at LPI/SS." And so on. We think these are codes for dead drops and signal sites. Wanna tell us where they are? No? I guess we'll be able to figure them out, eventually.'

'Can we take a break?' asked Masterton, desperately. 'I need a smoke. Please.'

\*

By the time they returned, the group in the observation room had been joined by Assistant U.S. Attorney Clifton Niemeyer. In the interview room, something of the old, cocky Masterton had reappeared.

'Look,' he said, 'I know it looks bad, but all of it is just fantasy-island stuff. It's not real. I keep getting asked how I would go about it if I really did intend to sell out to the enemy. In fact, Mel, that's exactly what Catherine Gordon did ask me, if you remember.' He shrugged. 'That's all it was.'

'I see,' said O'Rourke. She showed Masterton another document. 'We found this in your trash.'

Masterton turned it over in his hand. He shrugged again. 'Doodling,' he said. 'Meaningless stuff.'

'Oh?' said O'Rourke. 'Is that a fact? You see, Mitch, we thought it might all mean *something*. Look at this: "Fri 30. B. Bridge/RCPark". Could mean "Boulder Bridge at Rock Creek Park", couldn't it? So, guess what, on Friday we followed you. We saw you leave a chalk mark on a mailbox at Blues Alley, then stop and check out the Old Stone House, before driving on towards the park.'

She took some photos out of the manilla envelope and passed them across the table.

'Good, aren't they?' O'Rourke said. 'Clear as a bell. That's you leaving a package under the bridge in the park.' She showed Masterton another photograph. 'And, later on, this guy came and collected it. Yevgeny Kurilenko, isn't it? Lieutenant-colonel in the KGB. Aka "Y", no?'

O'Rourke was again gratified to see that Masterton looked stunned. He shrunk back in his seat, visibly deflated, defeated, even.

Bettinelli leaned forward in his chair, and turned over a hand. 'So you see, Mitch, we really do know what you've done. We just don't know how you could betray your country and send so many men to their deaths.'

Masterton, who had been slumped in his chair, jerked upright. 'What! What are you talking about?'

'Come on, Mitch,' said Bettinelli. 'You know that the agents you betrayed were picked up by the KGB and never heard from again. Some we know for sure got a bullet to the back of the head, the rest we just presume did. Not a risky presumption, I don't think.'

'But ... but ... I never ... I mean, how could I? I didn't know the names of assets I wasn't running myself. It's standard procedure, and anyway—'

'Oh, come *on*, Mitch,' Bettinelli exclaimed. 'When you came back from Helsinki, you worked on the Soviet/East Europe desk. You might only have known the codenames of our assets, but you would have had access to the type of intel they were transmitting to the Agency. You would also have known passwords, codenames for drop sites and who knows what else. Pass all that onto Moscow and the KGB would have had no problem identifying the sources.'

Before, if Masterton had appeared stunned when O'Rourke had revealed that the FBI had followed him to Boulder Bridge, now he looked truly shell-shocked, utterly aghast.

'That's not right. It doesn't work like that. Does it? But anyway, I swear to you, I never disclosed any information that could lead to the identification of an asset. I swear—'

'Really?' said O'Rourke. She found another document in her bundle and passed it over to Masterton, who seemed to be staring at it without actually seeing it. 'This is from the Boulder Bridge dead-drop site. Look what you wrote: "PELICAN is a Czecho army colonel, named Pavel Souček." You would have signed his death warrant, if he hadn't already been exfiltrated.'

'No, no, *no*,' said Masterton. 'You've got it all wrong. I only gave them his name because I *knew* he'd escaped. In fact, I only knew his real name at all, because he was out. Sure, when I first offered to work for them, I gave them some names. But they

were triple agents pretending to work for us. You have to believe me. In fact, why not give me a polygraph test. Yeah, that's it, let me take a polygraph.'

There was an outbreak of murmuring in the observation room, quelled by Beckenhof.

Bettinelli laughed. 'I don't think so, Mitch. We've seen before, the dance you perform when faced with the so-called lie-detector test.'

This caused some bristling among the representatives of the CIA in the observation room. Meanwhile Bettinelli pressed on.

'Anyway, look at the evidence. You have accumulated huge amounts of money for which you have no credible explanation. We found the note in your trash and your little cache of keepsakes, none of which is a smoking gun, but all of which are deeply incriminating. We followed you to a dead drop site, later visited by a KGB officer, where we found classified documents. And we have a score or more dead assets. Q.E.D.'

Bettinelli started to rise, while O'Rourke began to collect her papers together. Masterton thrust out a hand, in a 'stop' gesture.

'Wait. Wait!' he said. 'Okay, okay. You've got me, I can see that. I'll tell you everything. But you've got to believe me.' He stabbed his finger on the desk. 'I. Never. Betrayed. Anyone. Sure, later on I dropped in some names to my handlers, but only after I was pretty damn certain they'd already been exposed. It just helped with my credibility, get what I'm saying?'

Bettinelli sat back down again. O'Rourke stopped packing up her papers.

'What *are* you saying?' she said. 'Are you confessing to passing secrets to the KGB?'

Masterton squirmed for a moment. 'Yes. That's exactly what I'm saying,' he said. 'I'm laying my king down.' He made a sweeping gesture with his hand. 'But, I repeat, I didn't sell out any of our assets. I didn't even know half of them, for chrissakes.'

'Let's be clear,' said Bettinelli. 'You now admit that you passed over classified documents that would be of benefit to the communists and betrayed your own country?'

'I never saw it like that.'

'Oh?' said O'Rourke. 'How did you see it?'

Masterton shrugged. 'When I started, I passed over stuff that looked good – it was all kosher – but which I was pretty sure they already had.'

'You seem to have put a lot of faith in your ability to judge just what the KGB did or didn't know,' said Bettinelli.

'Sure,' said Masterton. 'I'm an experienced intelligence officer, working in the Soviet/East Europe Division of the CIA. I trusted my judgement.'

'But it wasn't all chickenfeed, was it?' said O'Rourke. 'The KGB paid you a hell of a lot of money. They wouldn't have done that unless they were getting something important, stuff they really wanted, would they?'

'Sure, it was stuff they really wanted. They were creaming their pants for it, actually. But important? I don't think so.'

'How do you figure that?' said Bettinelli. 'You must have been passing highly classified—'

'Yeah, yeah. But it's a game, isn't it? You spy on us, we spy on you. It's all self-serving. It justifies the existence of thousands of case officers and agents collecting insignificant information, in defence of meaningless secrets. All at great expense.'

'But we're at war,' said O'Rourke. 'Okay, maybe no shots have been fired, yet, but the threat is there, constantly.'

'Bullshit. We've won this so-called war, hands down. We've cleaned their clocks. They know that in any real conflict, any actual war, they'd be wiped out.'

Bettinelli and O'Rourke sat in shocked silence for a moment.

'So,' said O'Rourke, 'you decided to back your judgement over that of the Pentagon, the NSA, the CIA and the intelligence services of our allies? Is that it?'

Masterton shrugged. 'Yeah. I know what's really damaging to our interests, and what's best for our foreign policy and national security.'

In the observation room, there was another outbreak of murmuring and a shaking of heads.

'That's why you did it, then?' said O'Rourke. 'You thought you knew it didn't matter, that it was just all a game?'

Masterton laughed. 'No, Mel. That just *enabled* me to do it. The *reason* I did it is straightforward enough. You said it yourself. They gave me a shitload of money. A *shitload*.'

\*

That was it for the day. Masterton was carted off to spend the night at the pleasure of the US Government in the Alexandria Detention Centre, a few miles south of Arlington. The group from the observation room, minus O'Shaughnessy and Beckenhof, who had gone off to a meeting together, but with the addition of O'Rourke and Bettinelli, convened in a nearby conference room for a debrief. Jefferson and McCain joined them almost immediately, carrying cups of coffee. Bertram Malloy took the chair. He turned towards AUSA Niemeyer.

'Counsellor,' he said, 'perhaps you'll kick us off?'

'Sure,' said Niemeyer. 'Well, that was quite an eyeopener, I must say. It would have been good to get a signed confession, but – hey! – I'm not going to kick a gift horse in the ass.'

O'Rourke had to smile at this. She'd heard of Niemeyer. He had something of a reputation for mangling his metaphors in what he must have thought was an appealing, folksy kind of way, but he also had a reputation for a razor-sharp mind and a ruthless streak.

'Hang on,' said McCain. 'Coop and I weren't in the room. Are you saying Masterton spilled his guts?'

'Sorry, Chester,' said Malloy. 'I should have brought you two up to speed.'

He proceeded to do just that, thoroughly, but succinctly.

'Wow!' said Jefferson. 'Not a slam dunk, but close enough.'

'What about the enchanting Rosalita Campos?' asked Malloy. 'What did you get out of her?'

'Bupkis,' said Jefferson. 'She knows nothing, *nada*. She was completely shocked – shocked I tell you! – to learn that her beloved Mitch was a spy and a traitor. Brought a tear to the eye, didn't it, Chester?'

McCain grinned and shook his head. 'She stood by her story that Masterton had told her that their income was being supplemented by some super-successful investments he'd got involved in with his old buddy.'

'What's the name of this old buddy?' asked O'Connell. 'Warren Buffett?'

'Might as well be,' said Jefferson. He picked up a typewritten document. 'This is a transcript of our interview with her. Listen up:'

*Have you ever met Mitch's friend?*

No.

*Do you know his name?*

No.

*How long has your husband known him?*

I don't know.

*Do you know where he lives right now?*

No.

'Apparently,' said McCain, 'she's "just a housewife". Left all the family finances to her clever husband. She did admit that she knew Masterton worked for the Agency, but affected surprise to learn how little the CIA paid its agents.'

'Well, she got that damn right!' said Olsson.

'What's happened to her?' Green asked.

'She's been charged and bailed to appear in court tomorrow,' said Niemeyer.

'We've hung onto her passport and sent her home to look after her kid.'

'Never took you for a bleeding heart, Counsellor,' said Bettinelli, with a grin. 'You'll be voting next for Gary Hart or Walt Mondale, or whatever other Red-lover the Democrats put up against the Gipper.'

'He *should* vote Democrat,' said O'Connell, waiting a beat. 'No-one else is going to!'

There was much laughter at this. O'Rourke noticed that Green looked a little puzzled.

'Why do you think Masterton denied betraying the assets?' he asked, of no-one in particular.

'He was ashamed,' said Olsson. 'Pure and simple. He couldn't admit he'd sent men to their death.'

'You think so?' Green said. 'Did he really strike you as a man racked with guilt?'

'What are you getting at, Michael?' asked Gordon.

Green shrugged. 'I'm not even sure I know. I'm just trying to understand why he was ready to confess to betraying his country, but balked at the last.' He turned towards Niemeyer. 'Would it make any difference to the potential sentence?'

The AUSA frowned. 'Possibly. The death penalty's off the table and as it stands, I'd be asking for life with no possibility of parole.'

'Mel, you were in the room,' said Gordon. 'What did you make of his denials?'

O'Rourke shook her head. 'I honestly don't know, Catherine. He certainly sounded genuine enough. But that's Mitch Masterton for you. He seems to be able to lie without any compunction.'

'And,' said Bettinelli, 'without any tell signs.'

They sat in silence for a few moments, absorbing what they'd heard, until Malloy brought the meeting to a close.

'Okay, everyone. I think that's enough for today. Masterton will be arraigned tomorrow, and we'll go from there. Paul, I take it you'll have your guys keeping eyes on Señora Campos?'

'Sure thing,' said Bettinelli.

'Good,' said Malloy, 'let's wrap this up. And, folks, don't forget, this is a win, a big win. You should all be proud.'

Some of the agents headed for home, some back to the office. Olsson suggested one for the road, and he, O'Rourke, Green, McCain, and O'Connell set off for the nearby Woodford Road Tavern. O'Rourke took in the gas lamps outside, and an old world feel inside, with exposed brickwork which reminded her of the Brickskeller, and heavy wooden furniture. There was a long, wide bar, with a large selection of beers, though not as extensive as in the other pub. They settled into a booth near the back with their drinks. After a celebratory clinking of glasses, there was some desultory discussion of Masterton's interview, but there didn't seem much more that was new to say. Olsson, McCain, and O'Connell soon switched to analysing the fortunes of the Redskins, arguing about whether they could repeat their Superbowl win, having made a good start to the season. O'Rourke moved a little closer to Green.

'Okay, Michael,' she said. 'Give. Something's eating you about Masterton. What's up?'

'I don't know, Mel. Something doesn't add up. I mean, there's no actual direct evidence that he betrayed the assets, is there? And you said yourself that his denials sounded genuine.'

'Sounded genuine, is right. Doesn't mean they *were* genuine. And he definitely had access.'

'Did he? To all the assets?'

'What are you getting at?'

‘I can’t help thinking about my own agent, codename KOJAK. How did Masterton even know of his existence, let alone his real name?’

‘I don’t exactly know how these things work in the weird and wonderful world of spooks, but don’t you share your product, as you call it, with the Agency?’

‘Up to a point, yes. But at Head of Station to Deputy Director level. Even the DD wouldn’t know our asset’s real name. So, I can’t see any way that someone in Masterton’s position would.’

‘Wouldn’t it just be like what Bettinelli said to him? The KGB would be able to work it out from the nature of the intel?’

Green thought about that for a moment, then shook his head. ‘Maybe, but I doubt it. There’s no reason why Masterton would have even seen the product.’

‘But what are you saying? We know Masterton was selling secrets to the Reds. If he didn’t also betray our assets, then that means there must be another mole, doesn’t it?’

‘That’s exactly what it means.’

\*

O’Rourke didn’t want to believe that there was a second mole, that Masterton was essentially a patsy. She was still thinking about it the next day, when she drove across the George Mason Memorial Bridge, and turned left onto George Washington Memorial Parkway, passing Washington National Airport on her way to the Federal Court building on South Washington Street in Alexandria. The Federal Court was an imposing three-storey building, probably from the 1930s, O’Rourke thought. There was an arresting frontage, with four marble cylindrical colonnades that stretched from just below the roof, to a ledge halfway down the building. The numerous sash-windows looked in need of some care and attention. She had heard talk of plans to build a new courthouse on Jamieson Avenue, but then, talk was cheap.

O’Rourke didn’t need to be there; there was no obligation for her to attend a formal arraignment that would probably last only a few minutes. At this stage, she wouldn’t be called upon to give evidence. In fact, she doubted if she’d ever have to, at least as far as Masterton was concerned. It looked like he was going to plead guilty, thereby avoiding the need for a trial. So, from O’Rourke’s point of view it was just a matter of closure, of putting the COSSACK affair to bed. As for Rosalita, O’Rourke doubted whether AUSA Niemeyer would proceed to a prosecution; after all, Alice Sörenson had



been loth even to apply for an arrest warrant. Maybe that would be cleared up this morning.

There was a crowd milling around the courthouse. O'Rourke shouldn't have been surprised; this was a huge case, one that had captured the national imagination in a short space of time. Cloak and dagger, betrayal, an exotic foreign woman – catnip to the media and the public alike. She parked in a space reserved for law enforcement and entered the building through the back entrance, notionally reserved for judges, but routinely used by the police.

The courtroom was packed, standing room only in the public areas. She joined Paul Bettinelli in the seats behind Niemeyer and a couple of his assistants at the prosecution table.

'Couldn't keep away, eh Mel?' Bettinelli said.

'You either, it would seem,' she replied.

O'Rourke looked around. Masterton and Rosalita were at the defence table along with a young, harassed-looking woman, futilely trying to stop her long dark brown hair escaping from behind her ears. O'Rourke tagged her as a public defender. Rosalita was conservatively dressed in a navy pants suit and Masterton looked smart in a well-cut suit, not the one he'd been wearing the previous day.

Just then, the clerk of the court called them to order and they all rose as Judge Mackinlay Carberry entered and took his seat at the bench. He was a large, avuncular-looking man in his sixties, whose appearance belied a sharp legal mind. Rosalita was quickly dispatched. She was being charged only with tax fraud, to which she pleaded not guilty and her bail was extended without any objection from Niemeyer's assistant who was handling the case. Rosalita's attorney made a nervous attempt to have the charges dismissed, but Carberry waved away her motion. Then it was Masterton's turn.

'Well now, Mr Masterton,' said the Judge, 'are you ready to have the charges read and enter a plea?'

'No, your honour,' said Masterton, 'I am not.'

There was a buzz of conversation in the public gallery, quickly quelled by Carberry with a quietening movement of his hands. O'Rourke and Bettinelli exchanged glances.

'I see,' said the judge. 'And why is that, sir?'

'Your honour, I believe I am entitled to revoke my waiving of the right to counsel at this point?'

'That is correct. Is that now your intention?'

'Yes, your honour.'

This time, the buzz in the gallery became a din. Carberry banged his gavel.

'Order!' The din subsided. 'Very well. Have you engaged an attorney to represent you?'

'Your honour, all my assets have been frozen. I have no access to my bank account or savings. I am at the mercy of the court.'

Judge Carberry pursed his lips and sat in silence for several moments. He looked around the courtroom. His glance fastened on a man sitting a few rows back from the defence table. He was completely bald, and was wearing an expensive-looking pin-stripe suit. He was staring back at the judge through oversized thick-framed glasses.

'I do declare,' said the judge. 'Is the Court honoured by the presence of Mr Cornelius Hasselbank, or do these aging eyes of mine deceive me?'

The man stood up.

'No, your honour,' he said. 'Your perception is as sharp as ever. Cornelius Hasselbank at your service.'

Another buzz ran round the courtroom. Hasselbank was one of the most renowned defence lawyers in the whole of eastern USA.

'What's he doing here?' asked Bettinelli.

'Hasselbank?' said O'Rourke. 'My guess? Looking to jump on the bandwagon of one of the most high-profile cases of his career.'

There was another bang of the gavel. Carberry returned his attention to Cornelius Hasselbank. 'Tell me, sir,' he said, 'what is your usual hourly rate?'

'Why, your honour, I usually restrict myself to three hundred dollars an hour, though in deserving cases I have gone as low as two hundred.'

'Well, sir,' said the judge, 'I regard that as mighty charitable of you.'

He spoke briefly to his clerk.

'In this case,' he resumed, 'I am prepared to offer you twenty-five dollars an hour for work out of court, and thirty-five in it.'

The clerk whispered to him.

'I dang near forgot,' Carberry said. 'Reasonable expenses will also be payable. What say you?'

'Your honour, you appear to have made me an offer I cannot refuse.'

'Very well. We will recess for one week to allow the defendant to consult with his attorney. Court is adjourned.'

## Chapter Twenty-One

Washington DC, October/November 1983

For Green, life returned to something approaching normal. He went back to his bread-and-butter work at the embassy, monitoring and analysing intel, and liaising with the Agency. He even went out on a date with one of the secretaries from the embassy, not that it led anywhere. The intelligence community's attention had diverted away from Masterton who, at the reconvened arraignment hearing, pleaded not guilty to all charges and, despite Hasselbank's best efforts, was denied bail and remanded in custody. Instead, the hot topic had become, at least for the time being, the news of a possible defection from the KGB. Green discussed this with his head of station, Adrian Shawcross.

'Do we know who this putative defector is?' Green asked.

'We do not,' said Shawcross. 'The Yanks are playing this one particularly close to the chest. Even Benton has gone all tight-lipped.'

'Benton?'

'Yes. Benton Adams. He runs the Soviet/East Europe Division.'

'I know who he is. I'm still not sure—'

'Ah! Y'see, he's the chap I play golf with. In fact, Moira and I have been to dinner with him and his wife, Mary-Ann, several times.' He rubbed his chin. 'Not so much, recently, now I come to think of it. There's a rumour not all is hunky-dory *chez eux*. Well, anyway, we've developed quite a good relationship, actually. I scratch his back and he scratches mine.'

'What does that mean, exactly?'

'Well, y'know, where we can, we share information, all on the q.t., of course.'

Green had allowed a look of utter incredulity at what Shawcross was saying to cross his face.

'It's quite all right, Michael. Really it is. Benton is one of us. Utterly trustworthy.'

'Adrian, you do know that Adams is the boss of Mitchell Masterton, now on trial for espionage, accused of working for the Russians?'

'Of course I do. What of it?'

'Seriously? You don't think it's possible that Adams might have shared what you told him with his senior subordinate?'

‘Certainly not. I told you, Benton is absolutely pukka. We have an agreement: “for your ears only”.’

‘If you say so, Adrian.’ Then a thought struck, a thought that sent a chill through him. ‘You didn’t, by any chance, mention KOJAK’s real name to Adams? Or fill in some of the gaps in the product we shared with the Agency?’

‘Of course not. Well, not in so many words. I might have given him a steer in the right direction, but that’s all.’

Green was so infuriated by Shawcross’s insouciance, that, as soon as he left his office, he called O’Rourke’s pager. She rang back soon after. He filled her in on his conversation with his boss. There was a period of quiet as she thought through the implications of what he’d said.

‘So, what exactly are you saying, Michael? Spell it out.’

‘I don’t know what I’m saying, to be honest, Mel. *If* there’s another mole and Masterton isn’t COSSACK, after all, then we need to look hard at Benton Adams. Very hard.’

They agreed that they needed another perspective. The obvious person to consult was Catherine Gordon. So, the next day, Green told Shawcross he had some RACE-TRACK business to finish up, which was true in a way. He met O’Rourke outside the CIA field office on 2430 E St NW. Catherine Gordon was still occupying the same task force offices, but the security arrangements had been relaxed somewhat. Coming out of the lift they could even see that the blinds were up. Gordon was working away at her IBM Selectric, but got up to let them in. They sat down at the small table in her office.

‘Well,’ she said, filling the coffee machine, ‘this is unexpected. To what do I owe the pleasure?’

Green looked at O’Rourke and she nodded at him to go ahead.

‘Catherine,’ he said, ‘Mel and I have reservations about it being Masterton who betrayed our assets to the KGB.’

‘What?’ Gordon looked completely incredulous. ‘You’ve seen the evidence. For god-sakes, he confessed!’

‘We’re not saying he’s not a traitor,’ O’Rourke said. ‘We’re not completely crazy. He definitely sold secrets to the Reds. There’s no doubt about that. But we all witnessed

his denials in the interview with me and Bettinelli. They seemed pretty convincing, don't you think?'

Gordon frowned. 'Maybe. But we all agreed he can put on a pretty good act when he wants to.'

'But why would he? Guilt? Shame? I don't believe he feels either.'

Gordon seemed about to reply when another thought obviously struck her. 'Hang on, what are you saying? If Masterton didn't betray our assets, then who the hell did? Are you saying there's *another* mole?'

Green held up his hands. 'It looks like it.'

'Are you kidding me? If you're right, then we're going to have to go through the whole process again, rerun the investigation from the beginning!'

'Not necessarily,' Green said.

As Gordon passed round the coffee, they told her about their puzzlement about KOJAK getting burned, and Green's subsequent conversation with Shawcross.

'Benton Adams!' said Gordon. She stirred some sugar into her coffee, and took a sip. 'I know Adams. He's a lazy, arrogant shit. But a traitor? That's something else again. I mean, we looked at him, didn't we? We looked at him hard. And we cleared him.'

'I know,' O'Rourke said. 'he'd passed all his polygraphs, and there was no evidence at all of contact with foreign agents. But the killer was that there were absolutely no issues with his finances. No unusual payments into his bank account, no extravagant purchases, no hidden accounts.'

Gordon shrugged. 'Exactly.'

'But it's not conclusive,' said Green, 'is it? Traitors don't only do it for the money, do they? Look at Philby and that lot.'

'Are you saying that Benton Adams is a communist?' asked Gordon.

'We don't know,' said Green. 'But it's possible.'

Gordon finished her coffee and sat back in her chair while she thought about this. 'There's another point. You think Adams knew about KOJAK because Shawcross had been indiscreet?'

'Correct,' Green said.

‘But couldn’t it have been the case that Adams passed this information on to Masterton? Mel, haven’t you said in the past that the two of them were as thick as thieves?’

‘That’s right.’

‘Well, then.’

Green sighed. ‘In the interests of full disclosure, there may be one other thing that points to Adams’ innocence.’

‘Go on.’

‘Helsinki. While I was there, I ran an agent, Oleg, codename BOTVINNIK, who ended up in the Lubyanka with a bullet in the back of the head. How would Adams have known about Oleg?’

‘Did you share his product with us?’ asked Gordon.

‘Of course, but I don’t see how Adams would have known about it.’

‘Hmm,’ said Gordon. ‘Hang on a minute.’

She got up and went into the work room. Green went over to get himself some more coffee. O’Rourke declined. Gordon wandered back with a box file in her hands. She sat back down, putting it on the table in front of her. She opened it up, delved through the contents and took out a blue plastic wallet. She looked up at them.

‘This is Adams’ career record,’ she said.

‘You found that quickly enough,’ O’Rourke said, meaning it as a compliment, but received a withering look in return.

‘I’ve put all the personnel files of the operatives we looked at in alphabetical order. Their career records are in blue wallets, financial in red, personal in green, miscellaneous in yellow.’

O’Rourke made sure not to catch Green’s eye. ‘And what does the blue wallet tell us?’

Gordon allowed a tiny smile to pass fleetingly across her lips. ‘When Masterton was in Helsinki, Benton Adams was at Langley, but he hadn’t by then been made Head of Soviet/East Europe Division.’

‘What was he doing, then?’ Green asked.

Gordon paused and there was that tiny little smile again. ‘He was Head of Europe Division.’

'Which included Helsinki?' O'Rourke asked.

This time, it was the return of the withering look. 'Yes, Mel,' Gordon said. 'Oddly enough it did, Finland having managed to sneak its way into Europe while no-one was looking.'

'Oh. Yeah. Sorry,' O'Rourke said. 'I just meant that if Masterton knew about Michael's asset, BOTVINNIK, then Adams could have known too.'

'In fact,' Green said, 'it would have been his job to pass that on to the head of division.'

'Is it your theory that the two of them were working together, then?'

'No.' Green said. 'Adams has been quick to throw his buddy under the bus. I believe once Masterton offered himself to the KGB, Adams would have seen it as the perfect opportunity to use him as cover. He would have been only too happy to see Masterton become our prime suspect. If anyone was going to get caught, let it be him.'

'And he was right, wasn't he?' O'Rourke said. 'As far as everyone else is concerned, it's case closed, we've got our man.'

Gordon thought about this, then nodded her head. 'What do you bet that Adams wangled Masterton's appointment to the Soviet/East Europe Division when he came back from Helsinki?'

'I'm not taking that bet,' Green said.

Gordon shook her head. 'All we've got so far is circumstantial evidence and conjecture. It's plausible, even compelling. But what we need is proof, one way or another.'

None of them had anything much to say about that. Then O'Rourke sat bolt upright.

'Oh shit!' she exclaimed.

'What?' Green asked.

'You both watched the interview with Masterton, didn't you?'

'Yeah. So?'

'What was the one question we never asked him?'

Green shook his head. Gordon shrugged.

'We didn't ask him what his codename was.'

It took Green a moment to get the significance.

'No, you didn't,' he said. 'But if he's not COSSACK, then that's solid evidence there's another mole.'



'But not that Adams is that mole,' said Gordon.

'True,' O'Rourke said, 'but it's a start, isn't it?'

'If Masterton will talk to us,' Green said. 'Why should he? I bet Hasselbank will tell him to go "no comment".'

Gordon pursed her lips. 'He might not, you know.'

'Why?'

'Because we can tell him that if he does talk to us, he might be able to prove he didn't betray our assets,' said Gordon. 'And that seems to be important to him. Leave it with me.'

\*

O'Rourke, backed up by Gordon, persuaded Bertram Malloy that the question of Masterton's cryptonym, while not a point of great significance, was a loose end that needed tying up. He agreed to approach Hasselbank with a request that they should be allowed a short interview with his client, but that was refused; Masterton would be answering no more questions prior to the trial.

The next day, Gordon, Green and O'Rourke met up after work in the Q Street Café just off the Dupont Circle. Over coffee and pastries, they discussed their next move.

'Well,' Green said, 'it was worth a shot.'

'Sure,' O'Rourke said, 'but it means we're no further forward than we were. Catherine, what do you think are our chances of getting warrants to search Adams' apartment, carry out surveillance, and what have you?'

'Think snowballs and hell,' said Gordon.

They sat in silence for a time, stirring their coffee and toying with their pastries.

'Two choices,' Green said. 'Give up, and take Masterton as a win, just as Malloy told us to, or try to catch Adams off our own bat.'

'We can't give up,' Gordon said. 'Not if there's any chance he really is COSSACK.'

'No, we can't,' said O'Rourke. 'If COSSACK is still active, then lives are at risk. We mustn't let another asset face execution. We mustn't.'

Once again, they sat in silence for a moment.

'You're right, of course,' said Green. 'But how do we catch him?'

'In the same way that we planned to catch Masterton,' said O'Rourke. 'Follow him until he messes up.'

‘But there are only three of us,’ said Gordon, ‘and we’ll have to do it in our spare time. It’s going to be hard to keep Adams under surveillance without him getting wind of it.’

‘I didn’t say it would be easy.’

In fact, there were four of them, McCain, who also harboured a bad opinion of Adams, volunteering his services after O’Rourke had explained what they were doing. He it was who managed to clamp a tracker to the underside of Adams’ car, a four-year-old Chrysler Caprice. In theory that made surveillance a whole lot easier, but Adams appeared to be a reluctant car driver, often preferring to walk or take the metro. O’Rourke couldn’t argue with Gordon that keeping track of Adams without alerting him to their presence and without the resources of an official operation, was very difficult. As an FBI agent, she had experience of trailing a target on foot, but always with a team who could alternate, thereby reducing the chances of being spotted. Equally, acting off the books meant they couldn’t requisition a nearby apartment to use as an observation post.

Nonetheless, at one point, it looked as if they might have got their man. O’Rourke was on duty, one Tuesday night in November. It was bone-numbingly cold, and a fine drizzle had been falling the whole day. Shivering, despite being well wrapped up, at nine o’clock at night she was getting ready to call it quits. She was carrying a large shoulder bag containing several wigs, a variety of hats and another coat. Adams’ apartment block was on O St SW, a pleasant, tree-lined road in a well-off area, abutting Waterside Park on the Washington Channel. It wasn’t an easy location to maintain surveillance, especially in daylight hours, so O’Rourke tended to walk up and down changing her appearance from time to time. There was a café on the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> St which gave a partial view of the entrance to Adams’ block and provided a welcome refuge from the weather.

O’Rourke was just about to leave the café and go and retrieve her car from P St SW, when she saw a man, also bundled up against the elements, exit Adams’ building. The height and bulk were right, but she couldn’t get a clear enough view of the man’s face to be sure it was the CIA man. She decided to follow him anyway. He had an umbrella up, which meant she could hang back while still keeping him in sight. It helped that, as befitting the upmarket nature of the area, the streetlighting was very good. The man

turned right at 4<sup>th</sup> St and as he passed the eighteenth-century Wheat Row Houses, approaching the intersection with N St, he paused, and O'Rourke thought he might have decided to wait for a bus. However, if so, he must have changed his mind and he carried on walking. In a short space of time, the neighbourhood had changed markedly, becoming more rundown. The man continued to make his leisurely way northwards, regardless.

As the drizzle continued to fall, O'Rourke hoped against hope that she hadn't embarked on a wild-goose chase. On 6<sup>th</sup> St, she crossed the road, still keeping the man in sight as they passed Southeastern University, turning left onto 7<sup>th</sup> St. Up ahead was L'Enfant Plaza Metro Station, and O'Rourke had another decision to make. Could she follow Adams underground, assuming it *was* Adams, without being seen? Well, she'd come this far. She followed the man down to the mezzanine level and bought a day-pass from a machine, which enabled her to get through the barrier without flashing her FBI ID. From behind a pillar, she caught a glimpse of the man, who had loosened his scarf and opened his coat. It was Adams.

There were crowds in the busy interchange, even at that time of night, which meant she needed to keep quite close to her target, his umbrella no longer operating as a point of reference. But Adams seemed oblivious to his surroundings, employing no elements of tradecraft and she was able to keep him in sight as they descended the escalator to the lower level. Almost immediately, they were able to board a Blue-Line train westwards, en route to the White House and beyond. She got into the next carriage and could see Adams, apparently completely relaxed, through the glass panel of the connecting door. Where was he going? The train was busy, although not completely crowded, and naturally passengers were getting on and off at every stop, making it difficult to keep her quarry in view. O'Rourke alighted each time, just in case, stepping back on as the doors closed. This must have puzzled some of her fellow-travellers, but she was out of Adams' line of sight.

At the fourth stop, he got up to get off, again showing no signs of wariness. McPherson Square! Just up the road, on 16th St NW, was the Russian Embassy and Ambassador's residence. O'Rourke's heart skipped a beat. Here was going to be concrete evidence, at last. Again, there were a lot of passengers on the platform, but Adams appeared to be in no hurry, so she managed to keep on his tail, without having to get too

close. Out on the street, she swiftly changed her wig and hat, now affecting a blonde ponytail and Redskins' ball cap. She continued to hang back; after all she knew where he was going. Sure enough, they soon reached the gates of the embassy, and Adams paused to look through the railings. But then he carried on walking. Where *was* he going. Perhaps he knew of a side- or back-entrance. That must be it. O'Rourke kept as much as possible to the shadows, but still Adams appeared to be completely unconcerned about possible surveillance and took no precautions. Finally, he came to a halt at a low set of steps leading to an imposing, well-lit-up, double-fronted building, much in the style of the Alexandria Courthouse, with its mullioned windows and porticoed frontage, but on an altogether grander scale. Adams mounted the steps, walked the short distance up the drive to the front door and rang the bell. He was admitted without fuss. O'Rourke waited until the door had closed before nipping up the steps and taking in the wording on the brass plate by the door: University Club. She may not have been in DC for very long, but she knew that this was an exclusive private club, the haunt of politicians, judges, businessmen, and it would seem, senior Agency officers. She just hadn't realised it was so near the embassy. So, a wild-goose chase after all.

Morale dropped to an all-time low after that debacle. The four of them were close to giving up. It was only because McCain, in his own words 'a stubborn s.o.b', insisted on keeping going, that they stuck at it. And finally, they were rewarded. It was Green who had the lucky break. Perhaps some sixth sense kept him on watch outside Adams' apartment block later than had been the norm. Just like O'Rourke, he had made use of the café on the corner of 3rd St, in between wandering up and down the street. He'd volunteered to look after a dog, a black Labrador, belonging to one of the staff at the British Embassy who was away for a couple of days. Green also took the risk of taking up position behind a tree across the road from the apartment, for short periods of time, much to the Labrador's displeasure. He was weighing up whether to call it a night, when a taxi rolled up to Adams' door and disgorged a dark-haired woman who stood under a streetlight to adjust her makeup in the mirror of her compact. Green took a couple of polaroid snaps. Their quality wasn't the greatest; hardly pinpoint clarity. But they were clear enough. And anyway, he knew who he'd seen.

'Columbo,' he said, addressing the Labrador, 'say *hola* to Rosalita Campos Master-ton.'

## Chapter Twenty-Two

*Washington DC, November 1983*

'She could just have been visiting her husband's boss, on his behalf,' said Gordon.

'Maybe asking him to intervene in some way, or something.'

It was the next evening, and they had convened after work, this time in the Dubliner, close by Union Station. It was decked out just like any other Irish bar they'd ever been in, but catered for an older crowd and was quieter than Kelly's Irish Times next door.

'Anything's possible,' Green said. 'But I stuck around for long enough to see all the lights go out in the apartment. Rosalita didn't come out.'

'Holy-moly,' said McCain. 'Adams is porking Masterton's old lady!'

'Elegantly put,' said Gordon. 'Michael, it could mean that when PELICAN reported that the mole, COSSACK, was having an affair with a Latina woman, he could have meant Adams and Rosalita. We just assumed it was Masterton.'

'Actually, PELICAN didn't know the identity of either party. He'd just overheard two Russian generals joking about it. But yes, that's about the size of it.'

There was a moment's hiatus and they all paid attention to their drinks, with O'Rourke following Gordon in choosing draught Guinness. Green's enthusiasm for beer was beginning to rub off on her.

'I think this is a game changer,' said Gordon. 'We've got to take this to Malloy and Niemeyer. Make it official. Get a warrant.'

So, that's what they did. The next day, the four of them met Malloy, Niemeyer and Eddie O'Connell at the Point. Gordon laid out their case: Masterton's denial of betraying the assets; the fact that Adams had access to information about all of them, including KOJAK, which his subordinate appeared not to; and the evidence of his affair with Rosalita, as signposted by PELICAN. They had expected some pushback, and there was a bit of resistance from the AUSA, but not much.

'Am I missing something?' O'Rourke asked.

'Actually, you are,' said Malloy. 'We already knew about Adams' affair with Rosalita. Paul Bettinelli's team have been watching her. Added to that, you won't know that Masterton has had a change of heart. Despite his attorney's instructions he's seen fit to divulge his codename.'

'Wow!' exclaimed Green. 'Why?'

'He said that he couldn't see how it would do him any harm and might even help his defence. 'Course, it probably didn't hurt that the counsellor here promised to put in a word with the judge.'

'He might still be lying,' said Gordon.

'He might,' said Malloy. 'But why would he?'

'Well ... ', began Gordon.

'For chrissakes,' burst out McCain. 'What the hell was his codename, already?'

'Oh, didn't I say? MATCHMAKER. He said his codename was MATCHMAKER.'

'Fuck!' said Green.

'What?' asked O'Rourke.

'M! He signed the note in the dead drop in the park "M"! We assumed it was M for Mitch or Masterton, but it must have been for MATCHMAKER!'

'Fuck!' echoed O'Connell.

So, Malloy, Niemeyer and O'Connell were on board, or at least, partly so. O'Connell in particular had reservations; he was loth to give up Masterton as the one and only traitor. Still, the green light was given to continue the investigation into Adams. Niemeyer was confident he'd be able to get a warrant to search his apartment and office.

'But do we want to?' asked O'Connell.

'Why wouldn't we?' O'Rourke replied. 'Look at the stuff we got from Masterton's house.'

'Sure, I get it, but Adams isn't Masterton, is he? So far, he's played a clever hand. Anything we do have on him is only circumstantial. What happens if we send the stormtroopers in, turn his house and office upside down and don't come up with anything? We'd have tipped our hand and got bupkis. What then?'

They all thought about that for a moment. O'Connell was right.

'So, what *do* we do?' said Gordon.

'Well,' said Niemeyer, 'it doesn't have to be all or nothing does it?'

'What do you mean?' McCain asked.

'I mean, I apply for no-knock warrants and you guys serve them when we know for certain that Adams will be absent, maybe on holiday or at a conference or something of that order.'

O'Connell nodded his approval. 'I like it. Let's go for his apartment first off. It would have to be done quietly and discreetly, so that if we don't find anything of significance, Adams doesn't have to be any the wiser.'

'And we'd be no further forward,' said Gordon.

O'Connell shrugged. 'But no worse off. We'd just have to get him some other way.'

'Like we did Masterton,' O'Rourke said.

'Exactly.'

They all began to stand up, but Malloy stuck out a restraining hand. 'Hang on. Let's keep this as buttoned up as possible. That means only bringing anyone else in as absolutely necessary. So, Chester, Mel, you'll take point. One more thing. Michael, you can't go. Or at least, you can't go inside. This has to be an FBI operation. Period. I'm sorry, but that's how it is.'

\*

Initially, they thought they would mount the search of Benton's apartment one evening when he was at the University Club, but there appeared to be no pattern to his visits. It was Gordon who came up with a better plan. Using her Agency connections, she discovered that on the second Thursday of the month, Adams went to play chess with a former professor of his who lived across town, on campus at George Washington University. So, at seven-thirty in the evening, on 10 November, Green, McCain and O'Rourke, together with a techie called Park Lee Yeung, assembled in the Waterside Bar and Grill a stone's throw from Adams' apartment block. They were perfunctorily drinking coffee, all of them on edge, apart from Park Lee Yeung, as they waited for a 911 pager signal to O'Rourke from Aaron Saltwich. He was on campus, and would call to confirm Adams' arrival at the University. In line with Malloy's instructions, Green was going along to act as lookout outside Adams' apartment block. The signal came through at seven fifty.

Adams' block was a four-storey walk-up. Park Lee Yeung was there to get them in without leaving a trace, and having done so, go home. It was as well that he was there, because Adams had installed locks good enough to have given the two FBI agents a headache. Green was banished to take up his lookout position under the trees across the road. O'Rourke was struck by the modesty of the set-up. Adams was separated, kids away at university, and lived alone. There were two bedrooms, the second of

which had been turned into a study, a moderately-sized living room, kitchen and bathroom. Everything was neat and tidy, and there was the usual array of electronics gear and appliances. There was a new-looking sofa and two armchairs forming a horseshoe around a coffee table. But there was nothing out of kilter with what a reasonably well-off, senior Agency man could afford. Just as his bank records seemed to show, if Adams was getting huge payoffs from the KGB, he'd kept the money remarkably well-hidden. Of course, they might find his stash secreted in his sock-drawer, but O'Rourke doubted it. Unlike Masterton, Adams did not strike her as the sloppy type. They pulled on gloves and started in the living room.

'Jeez, this guy is neat,' said McCain. 'Everything in order, nothing out of place. Does he actually live here?'

The only items of interest were in a hidden locked drawer in the sideboard. The lock was not in the same league as those on the front door, and McCain was able to pick it without difficulty, and without leaving any tell-tale scratch marks. Inside were two pairs of handcuffs, a Glock 17 9mm semi-automatic pistol, boxes of hollow point parbellum ammo and a silencer. McCain picked up the Glock with a pencil through the trigger guard.

'Not your regulation piece,' he observed.

'No.' O'Rourke agreed. 'Don't suppose you're carrying an off-the-books backup, are you?'

He grinned.

They put everything back, locked the drawer, and moved on. O'Rourke went into the study, McCain the bedroom.

'Hey, Mel,' he called out. 'Come look.'

In the wardrobe, in plain sight, was what was obviously a go-bag: change of clothes, nightwear, washbag, and shaving kit. O'Rourke called Green on the walkie-talkie. There was some annoying crackle and interference, but they could hear each other pretty well. She told him about the bag.

'Passport, cash, cards, driver's licence?' he asked.

'Nope, not in the bag. His passport's in a drawer in the study. Nothing untoward about it. We'll keep looking.'



It took about another quarter of an hour. They'd just about given up, with nothing more to show for their efforts.

'Call it a day?' O'Rourke suggested.

'I guess so,' said McCain

They were checking to make sure everything was just as they found it, when McCain stopped what he was doing and stood upright.

'What is it, Chester?' O'Rourke asked.

'I'm not sure. I think I saw something.'

He stood motionless for a moment, then headed for the bathroom. O'Rourke followed him in.

'Mel, fetch me a stool from the kitchen.'

He put it in the shower tray and clambered up on it. Taking a multi-tool gadget from his pocket, he began to use the screwdriver attachment to unscrew the ventilation grille located among the top tier of bathroom tiles.

'What are you doing?' O'Rourke asked.

He spoke with a couple screws in his mouth. 'It may be nothing, but I must have noticed that the grille is on upside down. Look, the maker's name is the wrong way up.'

O'Rourke shook her head. 'The subconscious sure is a marvellous thing.'

'Eureka,' he said climbing down from the stool and passing a package to her.

'Fuck!' O'Rourke said. Inside a plastic bag was a passport, apparently well-used, with Adams' photo, but in the name of Howard Royle.

'We've got the bastard!' said McCain.

He and O'Rourke high-fived. She tried to call Green on the radio, but there was no response. 'Michael's walkie-talkie must be on the fritz'.

'Don't matter much,' said McCain. 'We're nearly done here.'

\*

As Green put the walkie-talkie to his ear, he felt something hard and cold press against the back of his head. The click of a pistol being cocked sounded like the loudest noise he'd ever heard.

'Turn off the walkie-talkie, and pass it back to me.'

He did as he was told.

'Michael Green, I presume.'

'Adams? How did you know it was me?'

There was a sound behind him that might have been a chuckle.

'That imbecile masquerading as your head of station, Shawcross, often talked about you and had been only too happy to describe you to me. Are you holding?'

Green began to shake his head, but that just caused the end of the gun barrel to be ground more deeply into the back of his head. He held up his hands.

'No. I'm not allowed to.'

Nonetheless, Adams gave him a quick once over, without pulling his gun away.

'Now then, Michael, nothing heroic please. I'm holding a Smith and Wesson .44 Magnum, not very different to the one Dirty Harry used in the films. I'm sure you know the damage one of these revolvers can do, so let's just take it easy, shall we? We're going to take a little walk across the road to my apartment. Okay?'

He shifted the revolver to Green's side so that it was partially hidden by his coat. Not that there was anybody around to pay them any attention.

'I take it the FBI are in my apartment,' said Adams.

Green said nothing and got a dig in the ribs with the gun for his trouble.

'Okay. Yes, the FBI are in your apartment.'

'Find anything, yet?'

'Only your go-bag, far as I know.'

'That a fact? You wouldn't lie to old Benton, would you?'

'You're the one with the fucking cannon.'

'So I am. Best not to forget that.'

By then they were climbing the stairs to Adams' apartment. They stopped outside his door.

Adams spoke quietly to Green. 'Knock on the door. Tell them your radio's not working.'

Green hesitated. Adams put the gun to his head again. 'Think I'm bluffing? I've got nothing to lose, now.'

Green knocked on the door. 'Hey guys, it's me, Michael. My walkie-talkie's given up the ghost.'

There was the sound of bolts being drawn back and the door swung open to reveal McCain. Before he could take in what he could see in front of him, Adams had shoved

Green through the doorway straight into him so that they both lost their balance and crashed to the floor. Adams moved quickly into the room, sidestepping the two of them. He kicked the door shut, while keeping his gun levelled on O'Rourke, who was half-turned from a sideboard on the other side of the room. She began to reach for the gun in the shoulder holster under her left armpit.

'Don't do it, Mel,' said Adams. 'I'd hate to make a mess of that lovely face, which a bullet from this Magnum would surely do.'

McCain and Green were beginning to disentangle themselves and clamber to their feet.

Adams briefly wagged his gun at them, before again training it on O'Rourke.

'You two stay down. Mel, take your gun out with two fingers. Slowly. Okay, now slide it over to me. Good. Now the backup in your ankle holster. That's right, nice and slow. Okay. You two, get up also nice and slow and go join the little lady. McBain, is it? Same procedure. First slide over your piece, then the backup. Right, now your radios. Excellent, we're getting along just fine.' He used his feet to manoeuvre the guns and radios into a pile without taking his eyes off them.

'How are you here?' O'Rourke blurted out.

Adams laughed. 'Pure dumb luck. I happened to arrive on campus just as a security guard was questioning your FBI pal. Don't know his name, but I've seen him around. The guard must have noticed him loitering and gone over to find out what his story was. Anyways, it might have had nothing to do with me, but I wasn't about to stick around to find out. And, sure enough, when I got back here, I spotted Michael keeping watch on my crib.'

'So, what's the gameplan, then?' O'Rourke asked. 'People know where we are. If we don't come back, they're going to come looking.'

Adams put his head on one side and slowly nodded it, as if she'd made a point he hadn't considered.

'You don't say? But not yet, I wouldn't have thought. Not just yet. Back to business. All right. All of you, back off and go and stand there behind the sofa. Okay. McBain give your cuffs to Mel. Mel, cuff him behind his back.'

'I—' began McCain.

‘Tell me you don’t have any and I’m liable to blow your black bastard head right off your fucking shoulders.’

They both did as they were told. Adams waved the gun at McCain. ‘Now sit down on the sofa. Right, Michael. Same thing with Mel. Not too tight, mind. Good. Mel, go join your partner. That just leaves our transatlantic cousin. Maybe you were an honour scout, Michael, and I can trust you to behave?’

‘Yes, I—’

Adams laughed. ‘No, I don’t think so.’ Keeping his gun pointed at them, he took out some keys and opened the hidden drawer in the sideboard, reaching in to take out the Glock, the silencer and a pair of the handcuffs. There was just a moment when his attention wasn’t fully trained on them. McCain looked as if he was about to do something, but O’Rourke shook her head, and he subsided back into his chair.

‘Okay, Michael, come on over here. Right. Now turn around.’

Adams got up close behind him and stuck the barrel of the revolver against his neck.

‘Hands behind your back.’ Adams snapped the cuffs on his wrists and pushed him away.

‘Go sit down,’ said Adams.

Green slumped into one of the armchairs. Adams stayed where he was, well out of range of anything they might try. Adams picked up his revolver and moved over to the spare armchair and sat down. In front of them, on the table, were the go-bag and a passport, the fake one, presumably. Adams picked it up, opened it, shook his head, and slipped the passport into his inside coat pocket.

‘How did you know?’ he said.

‘How did we know what?’ O’Rourke asked.

‘I mean, what brought you to my door? Do you have a warrant, by the way?’

O’Rourke nodded.

‘I see. So, I ask again, how did you know? What gave me away?’

Green shrugged, which wasn’t so easy with his hands cuffed behind his back. ‘Several things,’ he said. ‘We didn’t believe Masterton could have known about KOJAK. You, on the other hand, seemed to have access to all the assets. But the clincher was when I saw Rosalita arrive the other day for a late-night tryst. Booty call, I guess you’d say.’

Adams laughed. 'Fuck. If only we kept it in our pants, eh boys?'

'Did she know?' Green asked. 'Did Rosalita know that you and Masterton were spies.'

'She did not. Great lay, and not a complete numskull, but naïve as fuck.'

'So, you admit it, then?' said O'Rourke. 'You're COSSACK.'

'No point denying it now.'

'And you were willing to let your buddy Masterton take the rap?' said McCain.

Adams snorted. 'Buddy? That schmuck? You've got to be joking. Just collateral damage, is all.'

'Is that what you tell yourself about the assets who died because of your betrayal? Just "collateral damage"?' O'Rourke said.

'Exactly. They knew what they were doing when they signed up for this life. They knew the possible consequences. We all did.'

'And that makes it okay?' Green said.

Adams shrugged. 'Casualties of war.'

'Except we're not *at* war, are we?' said McCain.

'That's not what Mel said to Masterton in the interrogation. I've read the transcripts. She's right. *Of course* we're at fucking war. Any day now that warmonger Reagan will launch an offensive and NATO will dispatch Pershing and Tomahawk cruise missiles to rain down on Moscow, and the balloon will go up.'

'You really believe that?' said O'Rourke.

'I do.'

'Is that why you did it?' asked McCain. 'Turn traitor and spied for the Reds?'

'Traitor? I'm no traitor. In fact, I imagine I'm regarded as quite the hero by my country.'

'Your country?' said McCain. 'I don't understand.'

'Well, you should, you of all people. Remember source SEABISCUIT, and your interview with that idiot, Dewey?'

'Of course. He was a fantasy merchant. Told a story about a highly placed mole with Ukrainian antecedents in the Agency. It was total bullshit. He... Oh fuck!'

To O'Rourke, Adams was looking not so much like the cat that got the cream, but like the cat who'd just been given the keys to the whole fucking dairy.

‘Exactly, McBain. I see you understand.’

‘I don’t,’ said Green. ‘What the fuck’s going on.’

‘We all thought that Dewey had made up the story,’ said O’Rourke, ‘that source SEABISCUIT didn’t exist.’ He turned his head towards Adams. ‘But he did, didn’t he?’

‘Absolutely. We planted him. You know, Dewey never admitted he’d made it all up, because he hadn’t. But when the time came for the planned next meeting, source SEA-BISCUIT never showed, and was never heard from again.’

‘So,’ said McCain, ‘we made no further efforts to try to locate the mole. We turned all our attention back to Masterton.’

‘Pure *Maskirovka*,’ said Green. ‘I congratulate you.’

Adams bowed. ‘Thank you. We have deception in our blood. So, you see, I am not a traitor. My family name is Adamanchuk. I am loyal to my ancestors’ homeland, Ukraine.’

‘Even though it’s nothing more than a vassal state of Russia, now?’ O’Rourke said.

Adams snorted. ‘Bullshit. If it were not for Russia, Ukraine would have become a fascist state under the Nazis. Now, it is only the Soviet Union that provides a bulwark against Western imperialism, against Reagan’s warmongering. If—’

‘Oh, for God’s sake, spare us the pious platitudes,’ O’Rourke said. ‘You’re a traitor, pure and simple. A bottom-feeder.’

Adams smiled, though she didn’t think there was much humour in it. ‘Well, let’s agree to disagree, shall we? And, much as I’m enjoying our little chat, I really must be getting on. Places to go and all that.’

He got up from the armchair and backed away to the sideboard.

O’Rourke didn’t like the fact that he hadn’t bothered to disarm their weapons, or neutralise their radios. He must have known that if he left them alive, even handcuffed as they were, they would find a way to release each other and then set off in hot pursuit, alerting the authorities to cover the airports and train stations. They’d be able to report that he was likely to be using the name from his second passport, Howard Royle. No, he couldn’t afford to leave them alive. What’s more, he’d gone to the trouble of getting the Glock and the silencer out of the drawer. Suppressors never work perfectly with revolvers, and while the semi-automatic didn’t have the stopping power of the Magnum, O’Rourke knew it would do the job well enough. Sure enough, Adams

put down the revolver and picked up the Glock, screwing the silencer into the barrel. He racked a bullet into the chamber.

Gun in hand, he approached the table. Did O'Rourke detect a moment of hesitancy, a hint of doubt in his manner? After all, while he had surely sent men to their deaths, it was doubtful if he'd ever actually killed anyone himself, in cold blood.

As he wavered, Green sang out, 'Hey, don't forget your bag, man.'

Momentarily, Adams' attention turned first to Green, then the bag in question. Without warning, McCain kicked out at the table with both feet, lifting it off the floor so that a long edge caught Adams in the solar plexus, knocking him off balance. McCain rushed forward, but before he could reach his target, Adams raised his pistol and shot him between the eyes at point blank range. McCain's head snapped back, but his momentum kept him moving forward and he crashed into Adams, the two of them tumbling to the floor in a tangle of arms and legs.

By then, O'Rourke had jumped up out of her seat and could see out of the corner of her eye that Green was on the move too. They were both hampered by having their hands cuffed behind their backs, but he was further away from Adams. O'Rourke hurled the up-ended table and followed in behind McCain, managing to avoid the two men on the floor. Adams struggled to get out from underneath McCain's inert body, while flailing around with his right hand, searching for his gun. She kicked the Glock across the room and dropped to the floor onto her backside. As Adams began to sit up, she wrapped her legs around his neck in a scissors grip, locking her right ankle over her left and squeezing tight. Adams started to make gasping, croaking noises and to pummel futilely at her legs. O'Rourke was beginning to feel the strain, but she had the leg muscles of the habitual runner and managed to keep up the remorseless pressure on Adams' windpipe. He continued to splutter and struggle, as his face turned red and his popping eyes became more and more bloodshot. Green was shouting something at her. At first, she couldn't take it in.

'Mel, stop. STOP. He's dead.'

## Epilogue

*November/December 1983*

As O'Rourke stepped down from the Dodge Diplomat after it parked in the driveway at the Green Hill Cemetery in McCain's home town of Greensboro, North Carolina, she was gratified to see that there was an impressive turnout of law enforcement officers, both at the state and local level. The ceremony at the nearby First Baptist Church on W Friendly Street had been a small, mainly family affair, but the funeral was going to involve full FBI honours. The cortège had been accompanied from the church by a squad of motorcycle outriders, and met at the cemetery by a mounted honour guard. There was to be a bagpipe serenade and a helicopter flyby. As well as O'Rourke, the FBI had sent Bertram Malloy, Eddie O'Connell, Eugene McKenna, Paul Bettinelli, Aaron Saltwich and a host of others from the Washington and North Virginia field offices, all, like her, immaculately suited and booted. Green was there, and the Agency was represented by Martin Beckenhof, along with Gordon and Olsson, of course. Despite the heroic efforts of the undertakers, it had been decided to have a closed-casket funeral and the coffin had been draped with the American flag. O'Rourke had found the church service, low-key and intimate as it was, intensely moving. She'd cried. At first, she'd tried to cover it up, not to appear like a weak woman. But then she thought 'Fuck it!': a man who had been a close colleague, in fact, a friend, had been brutally shot to death in front of her. He deserved her tears. Malloy was to give the eulogy and there was to be a twenty-one-gun salute. O'Rourke wondered whether all this pageantry, fitting though it was, might prove dispassionate and impersonal. In the event, Malloy kept his speech short, emphasising McCain's dedication, diligence and, above all, heroism. It could have been unbearably corny, but Malloy's understated, measured tones meant O'Rourke found herself moved once more, moved to tears again. She felt an arm around her shoulders and lifting her head saw Green looking more serious and sombre than she had ever known him. McCain, she learned – how had she not known? – was divorced, without children, and although his ex-wife had flown in to attend, at the end of the eulogy Malloy presented the carefully folded-up flag to his mother, Eugenia, along with the J. Edgar Hoover Gold Medal for Bravery.

O'Rourke had been placed on administrative duties in the aftermath of the death of Benton Adams. There was an attempt by Internal Affairs to suggest there might be a



case for a charge of excessive force, and launched a full investigation which dragged on much longer than seemed necessary. At least, as she saw it. Eventually, though, she was cleared. Really, the fatal shooting of McCain, together with her testimony and Green's, made it a foregone conclusion. In fact, once the dust had settled, she was awarded the FBI Director's Award for Excellence in Performance. She also had to attend mandatory counselling. Of course, this was not the first time that O'Rourke had been forced to take a life in the line of duty, having shot the KGB agent in Quito. But Adams' death had been a particularly intimate, physical encounter, not some relatively impersonal shooting. She told Green she had moments of recrimination and self-doubt, but that on the whole, she was comfortable with what she'd done, but she could tell he wasn't so sure. Fair enough. O'Rourke had acted in self-defence, but she accepted it had been a shock to the system, not something you got over easily. Green would want to keep an eye on her, as best he could. As far as she would let him.

The investigation finished weeks after the incident in Adams' apartment. Not long after, the Masterton affair was also finally put to bed. To celebrate the final chapter of the RACETRACK saga, O'Rourke, Olsson, Gordon and Green met for a drink in, of course, O'Rourke's. They raised a glass to McCain, whom they had all liked and respected, including Olsson, even if the two of them hadn't always seen eye to eye. Naturally, the conversation turned to the momentous events that had dominated their lives for so many months.

'Rosalita got off damned easy,' said Olsson. 'She lived the life of Reilly thanks to her husband's treason and she ends up with a two-year suspended sentence and community service for tax fraud. Tax fraud for godsakes! If that's justice, I'm a linebacker for the Redskins.'

'It was good enough for Al Capone,' said Green.

'Yes,' said Gordon, 'and she stuck to the line that she knew nothing. Had no idea that her husband was a spy for the KGB, let alone that her lover was too.'

'Does anyone here believe that?' Green said.

'Christ, no,' said Olsson. 'It's just not credible that she didn't have some inkling of what was going on.'

'I'm not so sure,' said O'Rourke. 'Women don't always know exactly what their menfolk are up to. Also, I don't think it would have been difficult for Adams to conceal his activities. As for her husband, maybe it was a case of not *wanting* to know.'

'What about him?' said Green. 'Thirty years to life in Masterton's case might mean he'll die in prison.'

'And it might not,' complained Olsson. 'They should have locked him up and thrown away the key.'

'Isn't that more or less what's happened?' said Gordon.

'More or less don't cut it,' said Olsson. 'He should rot in jail.'

'So, what would you have done with Adams, if he'd ever come to court?' said Gordon.

'Just what did happen. The death penalty.'

'That's not how it was, Robert,' said O'Rourke. 'It was a life-or-death struggle, not an execution.'

Olsson, threw up his hands. 'Sorry, Mel, that's not what I meant. I know you only did what you had to do. Here, let me get another round in.'

He signalled over the waitress, another dark-haired, green-eyed lass who looked like she'd just got off the boat from the old country, except her name badge declared her to be called Krystina, and she told them she hailed from Katowice.

Once she'd taken their order, Green asked, 'Do you buy all that stuff Adams told us about the old country, his love of Ukraine?'

'Hmm,' said Gordon. 'Absent any other explanation of his motivation, I guess we just have to accept it. No offence to you, Mel, as Robert said, you did what you had to do, but it would have been good to have had some time in the box with him.'

'For what it's worth,' said O'Rourke, 'I believed him. But I don't know that I understand it. I mean, what was he, third-generation Ukrainian? Had he even ever been there? Just seems a bit tenuous, is all.'

'Perhaps,' said Gordon, 'but I'd like to know a bit more about his parents, what they believed, how they brought him up, and so on. After all, most people of faith learned it from their parents. Maybe that's how it was with Adams.'

They all thought about that for a moment, as Krystina returned with their drinks, which Olsson paid for.

They batted the issues around for a while, until Gordon and Olsson had to go. Almost immediately, just as Green was about to suggest another round, much to his obvious disappointment, O'Rourke finished her Guinness and prepared to leave.

'Time to go home,' she said.

She stood up, shrugged her coat on, picked up her purse and turned to leave. Then she turned back.

'Well, Michael Green,' she said. 'Are you coming?'

For a moment he sat in stunned silence. O'Rourke was smiling down at him.

'Yes, ma'am,' he said.



# **Part Three**

*Analytical Commentary II:  
Reflections on the Writing Process*



## **Introductory Notes**

This third part of the thesis reflects on the processes involved in writing *The Cossack Variation*. First of all, I discuss the decision-making processes that led to choosing a particular narrative point of view and the consequences for the development of the novel. Secondly, I consider to what extent the narrative effectively incorporates the key elements of the “realistic” approach identified in the Analytical Commentary I. The third section assesses how far emulating the “realistic” approach proved compatible with producing a fluent spy thriller, with particular focus on the suspense aspects. Fourthly, I reflect on the original contribution the project makes, as an example of research-led practice, to knowledge and practice. Finally, in some brief concluding remarks, I refer to the enduring appeal of Cold War spy fiction, revisit the key aspects of the “realistic” approach, reiterate the original contribution to knowledge and practice made by this project and offer some suggestions for further study.

## 1. Narrative Point of View

*Every narrative combines several "points of view"*

Tzvetan Todorov (1977: 28)

Unless a narrative consists entirely of a monologue, then Todorov is surely correct; the issue for the writer is to choose which characters' points of view to adopt, to what degree, and in what style. This choice, according to David Lodge, "is arguably the most important single decision that the novelist has to make, for it fundamentally affects the way readers will respond, emotionally and morally, to the fictional characters and their actions" (2011: 26). This section reflects on the process by which I made this decision in the writing of *The Cossack Variation*, with particular regard to how the choice of narrative points of view bears upon the production of "realistic" Cold War spy fiction. Subsection 1.1 considers the choices made by Cold War spy fiction writers seeking to adopt a more "realistic" approach; 1.2 maps the initial processes by which I made my own choices; 1.3 discusses the nature and form of third-person narratives; and 1.4 relates the choice of point of view to the "realistic" approach to spy fiction writing.

### 1.1 Point of View in the "Realistic" Approach

Aiming at a "realistic" approach does not in itself necessarily dictate the choice of point of view. It is true that most Cold War spy novelists who may be placed at that end of the spectrum opt for a third-person point of view: Littell, Judd, Allbeury, Marchetti, Vidich, Rathbone, Freemantle, Sela, Williams, and so on. Given their desire to persuade the reader of the verisimilitude of their narratives, sometimes in a quasi-documentary style, it is perhaps no surprise that they employ this approach, which potentially offers a more objective, distanced standpoint. To Henry James, only the third-person narrative point of view could offer this "detachment", as he put it, excoriating, in a letter to H. G. Wells of 3 March 1911, the first-person point of view – "the accurst autobiographical form" – for its looseness, its reliance on "the cheap & the easy" (1999: 500).

On the other hand, le Carré, according to his biographer, Adam Sisman, wrote the early drafts of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, in the first person, handing the narration to "Billy", the former intelligence officer who was renamed Jim Prideaux in the final version. Originally, le Carré told Sisman, he intended to narrate the story in real time, but came to find this too restrictive: "I could think of no plausible way to pursue a linear



path forward while at the same time peering back down the path that had brought my man to the point where the story began” (2015: 355). In the end, he reverted to the third-person retrospective approach<sup>120</sup> of his other Cold War fiction.

A major exception to this consensus is Len Deighton, who favours the first-person point of view, both in the series featuring his unnamed protagonist (Harry Palmer in the films) and in the Bernie Samson novels.<sup>121</sup> Thus, in *The Ipcress File*, Deighton writes, in the first chapter:

I woke up saying to myself ‘today’s the day’ but I didn’t feel much like getting out of bed just the same. I could hear the rain even before I drew the curtains back. December in London – the soot-covered tree outside was whipping itself into a frenzy. I closed the curtains quickly, danced across the icy-cold lino scooped up the morning’s post and sat down heavily to wait while the kettle boiled (1966: 11).

Deighton later confided that, as a professional illustrator with no real experience of serious writing, he “immediately fell into the first person style without knowing much about the literary alternatives”. Having, as he puts it, “stumbled” into this narrative approach he decided to adopt it throughout. Possibly because, as he himself confesses, his “memory has always been unreliable”, he decided his protagonists would not tell the exact truth. Not that they would tell outright lies, but that their memories would tilt “towards justification and self-regard”. Hence, he came to the conclusion that “using the first person narrative enabled me to tell the story in the distorted way that a subjective memory provides” (2021: 236-38).

Having said that, in fact Deighton deviates from this formula in his triple trilogy featuring Bernie Samson. Eight of the volumes are written in the first person, but *Spy Sinker* proves the exception. That book, the sixth in the series, supports Deighton’s own admission that Bernie is an unreliable narrator (Jones, 1990: 109). *Spy Sinker* allows the reader to observe events through someone else’s perspective, for example that of one of Bernie’s bosses, Bret Rensselaer, who is the protagonist in the first chapter, and appears throughout. In fact, the principal character in this book is Bernie’s wife, double-agent Fiona Sansom, who is an important figure in the whole saga,

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<sup>120</sup> Chris Pavone’s *The Accident* (2014) is not strictly speaking a spy novel, though it does contain elements of espionage fiction, for example in including passages involving CIA officers, but it is noteworthy for adopting a third-person *present* point of view.

<sup>121</sup> Lionel Davidson’s *The Night of Wenceslas* (2000) is also written in the first person, narrated by his protagonist Nicholas Whistler.

whether or not she is on stage. Deighton chooses not to tell her story in *Spy Sinker* in the first person, partly, presumably, to restrict that narrative form to Bernie, the unreliable narrator. Using the third person for Fiona encourages the reader to accept hers as the true perspective, as well as making it easier for Deighton to switch the point of view to Bret and others, in chapters in which Fiona does not feature.

Adopting a third-person narration also enables Deighton more easily to employ some of the tropes and devices identified in Section 4 above, such as the inclusion of technical detail to create a “realistic” landscape for the reader. For example, early on in the story, Bernie and CIA agent, Max Busby, are attempting, against the odds, to escape from East Berlin through the Wall. To do so, they need to cross the *Sperrzone*, a region proximate to the Wall cleared of trees and other vegetation:

Getting through the *Sperrzone* was only the beginning. The real frontier was marked by a tall fence, too flimsy to climb but rigged with alarms, flares and automatic guns. After that came the *Schutzstreifen*, the security strip, about five hundred metres deep, where attack-trained dogs on *Hundelaufleine* ran between the minefields. Then came the concrete ditches, followed by an eight-metre strip of dense barbed wire and a variety of devices arranged differently from sector to sector to provide surprises for the new comer (1991: 31).

There are several points worth noting. If creating a “realistic” narrative involves encouraging the reader to enter into the author’s fictional world, then this sort of passage, which sounds so authentic, is clearly immensely effective. The reader doesn’t actually know whether the detail here is accurate, or even if the *Sperrzone* really existed, but the passage is utterly plausible and convincing. The use of the expressions in German is just the icing on the cake. It is also clear that this passage is written from the authorial point of view, with no attempt to suggest the reader is privy to either Bernie’s or Max’s perspective, though it is likely one or both would have known the lie of the land. It would not be impossible to include a passage like this in a narrative written from a first-person point of view, but it is a fact that whereas there are several passages of this kind in *Spy Sinker*, they are few and far between in, for example, *Berlin Game*.

## 1.2 Choosing a Point of View

In my own case, unconsciously confirming Lisa Zeidner’s assertion that “most of us when we write, make choices about point of view automatically and instinctively” (2021: 3), my original idea was to write in the first person. This was not because I

shared Deighton's desire to present the narrator as unreliable to a greater or lesser degree. Rather, it just seemed the "natural" thing to do, given that I wanted the reader to identify with the central protagonist (Michael Green) and to see the world and the narrative events through his eyes. To quote Zeidner again, I hoped "to encourage the reader to bathe in the character's view of the world" (4). However, as the story developed, I realised that for the plot to work, some of those events would need to take place in his absence. Hence, I decided to include a second narrator. By this time, I had become aware, both from my research into the scholarly work in the field and from my reading widely in the genre, that female protagonists rarely featured in Cold War spy fiction. As Priscilla L. Walton points out, "most secret-service agencies are male dominated" and this fact is reflected in spy fiction. She notes that "When (or if) women appear, they are almost inevitably relegated to minor positions or, alternatively, constructed as enemy agents" (1998: 658)<sup>122</sup>. Hence, I decided to introduce as co-protagonist, Mel(issa) O'Rourke, a strong female character with agency in her own right. It is not unusual for novelists to assign the narrative point of view to more than one character.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, as John Mullan observes (2006: 106), *Tinker Tailor* follows a pattern in le Carré's writing of shifting the point of view, opening the novel from the perspective of a character (the schoolboy, Roach) who is not the main protagonist (Smiley).

Having two narrators, however, presented problems of its own. An initial draft split the novel into two parts, with Green the narrator of Part One and O'Rourke of Part Two. But this did not work to my satisfaction and became just the first example of the point-of-view tail wagging the story-telling dog. A second draft kept Green as the protagonist of Part One, but in Part Two allowed Green and O'Rourke to narrate alternative chapters. But this resulted in some chapters being over-long. Nor did it solve the problem: the poor old story-telling dog was still playing second fiddle to the point-of-view tail. Put another way, the structure I was employing was placing infelicitous constraints on the story I wanted to tell. Further, as Mullan points out, with first-person narration the writer depends upon the reader accepting that the narrator possesses

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<sup>122</sup> Examples of the latter include KGB officer, Elena Katerina Bekuv in Deighton's *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Spy* (2021) and East German agent Elsa Fennan in le Carré's *Call for the Dead* (1967).

<sup>123</sup> A particular example is Tim Glister's recent *Red Corona* (2021), which is narrated in turn by his series protagonist Richard Knox; Knox's sometime ally, CIA agent Abey Bennett; Soviet scientist Irina Valera; KGB general Grigor Medev; rogue MI5 agent Nicholas Peterson; and NASA scientist Patrick Dixon.

perfect recollection: “Novels with first-person narrators invariably behave as if the narrator could replay a tape of dialogue in his or her head” (2006: 76). Examples of this are legion. At the beginning of Deighton’s *Berlin Game*, which is written in the first-person retrospective, Bernie Samson, the narrator, and his friend, Werner Volkman, are freezing to death in a car, waiting at Checkpoint Charlie in the Western Sector for an asset who never appears. They pass the time discussing a young GI in a glass-sided guard-box:

‘That American soldier wasn’t born, the spy thriller he’s reading wasn’t written, and we both thought the Wall would be demolished in a few days. We were stupid kids but it was better then, wasn’t it Bernie?’  
‘It’s always better when you’re young, Werner,’ I said. (1984: 5).

In addition, first-person point of view inherently and inevitably places restrictions on the narrative: no events where the narrator is not present could credibly be presented to the reader, other than by him or her being told about them by someone else. That device should only be used sparingly if it is not to set the reader at arm’s length. Of course, it would be possible to have each chapter narrated by whichever protagonist was appropriate without regard to symmetry, or even to combine first-person with third-person points of view. But such approaches would need substantial justification, which calls to mind Jonathan Franzen’s dictum: “Write in third person unless a really distinctive first-person voice offers itself irresistibly” (2018: 125).

### 1.3 Adopting a Third-Person Approach

Franzen sets a high bar, one which is particularly difficult to get over with two narrators. Rewriting the novel in the third person has, in my view, proved beneficial in several ways. Most of all, it alleviates the problem of my ability to introduce material unless either Green or O’Rourke have had direct experience of whatever is involved, other than in the Prologue. Thus, the narrative dictates the structure, not vice-versa. However, making the decision to switch from the first to the third person was not the end of the matter. Critics conventionally make a binary distinction between “omniscient” and “limited” third-person narration.<sup>124</sup> The term “omniscience” is defined by Norman Friedman as signifying “literally a completely unlimited ... point of view”, seen “from a godlike vantage point” (1955: 1171). It is so ubiquitous in discussions of

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<sup>124</sup> See in particular, Zeidner (2021).

narrative that Jonathan Culler is moved to claim that “Critics refer to the notion all the time” (2004: 22). For example, Dorrit Cohn refers to “a ‘somebody’ who is capable of looking through the skulls (or with the eyes) of other human beings” (1990: 796). With a “limited” third-person point of view, rather than adopting a detached, Olympian standpoint, the narrator inhabits a given character: the story is told from her point of view, focusing on her perspectives, feelings and insights. As Zeidner puts it, “critical to the third-person-limited point of view is that perceptions seem convincingly the character’s” (2021: 70).

However, this binary distinction is not uncontested. In particular, the notion of “omniscience” has come in for increasing scrutiny. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, for example, argues that “‘Omniscience’ is perhaps an exaggerated term” (2002: 96). James Wood echoes this sentiment. Although he adopts the term throughout his chapter *Narrating*, he cautions that “omniscient narration is rarely as omniscient as it seems”, as authors tend to have a way of making third-person omniscience “seem partial and inflected” (2019: §5). The most sustained criticism is elaborated by Culler, who asks, inter alia, whether the author really knows “the complete histories of minor characters” (24). In essence, he rejects the concept’s usefulness for the study of narration, in particular repudiating the analogy between God and the author.

In addition, it is not uncommon for one narrative mode to shade into another. Thus, the dividing line between “omniscient” and “limited” third-person narrative styles is not as clear-cut as it appears. After all, the “omniscient” narrator – Cohn’s “somebody” – by definition has, as Richard Walsh puts it, “access to the mind of another” (1997: 499), that is, to the thought-processes, feelings and experiences of all of the characters, and is thus able to tell the story from their points of view. Both the “omniscient” and “limited” third-person narrative styles may, to put it another way, seek to present the consciousness of the characters.<sup>125</sup> Hence, while in any given text there might be passages that represent paradigmatic examples of the two concepts, at times identifying the point of view in question becomes problematic. Take, for example, the first sentence of Chapter 6 of Deighton’s *Spy Sinker*: “Fiona Samson, a thirty-one-year-old careerist, was a woman of many secrets and always had been” (1991: 81). At first

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<sup>125</sup> See here, for example, Cohn (1978).

sight, this looks like classic omniscient third-person point of view: it is the detached external narrator's judgement that Fiona is a "careerist" and a "woman of many secrets". But as the passage unfolds, it becomes clear that these are judgements that Fiona herself shares. Considerations such as these prompt Zeidner, following Cohn, to suggest third-person narratives exist "on a spectrum of closeness and distance from a character" (2021: 68).

#### 1.4 Point of View in *The Cossack Variation*

For my purposes, the objective is not to undertake an abstract analysis of the narrative form of *Cossack*. Rather, what is at issue here is the relationship between narrative style and achieving a "realistic" approach to spy fiction writing. In that case, a closer look at two categories of point of view will suffice. Firstly, given the caveats alluded to above, rather than using the term "omniscient third-person narrator", I intend to follow Michael Toolan in talking about "a detached external reporter" (2007: 134).<sup>126</sup> That is to say, there are passages throughout *Cossack* which are unattached to any particular character:

(a) James Jesus Angleton was chief of the CIA Counterintelligence Staff from 1954 to 1975 and turned the Agency upside down in the search for double agents.

— Chapter One

(b) Century House was a short walk from Lambeth North Station along Westminster Bridge Road. It was an ugly, twenty-two-storey office block, towering over the neighbouring buildings ... There was an Esso garage at the base of the building, a genuine, functioning petrol station, not an SIS front. Maybe the powers that be thought its existence would help maintain the façade that Century House was just another office block. At any rate, it had been there for years.

— Chapter Three

(c) The weakening of détente had put a strain on trade relations between the Warsaw Pact countries and the West, but wheat was a significant export commodity for both Russia and Ukraine. What's more, President Reagan had promised to end the US trade embargo imposed by Carter as one of the sanctions following the invasion of Afghanistan. American firms were gearing up to re-open markets behind the Iron Curtain.

— Chapter Four

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<sup>126</sup> In more abstract, technical analyses, narratologists follow Gérard Genette in describing such a reporter as an "extradiegetic heterodiegetic" narrator (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002: 96-7; Culler, 2004: 27; Walsh, 1997: 498, 510).

(d) That was something that the CIA could do that the FBI could not; the Bureau could only subpoena bank records of individuals on whom it had opened an official case, whereas the Agency had carte blanche to look into the records of its employees.

— Chapter Twelve

These passages provide the reader with information that is entirely independent of the point of view of any of the characters in the novel. They also contribute to my attempt to persuade the reader of the “realistic” nature of the text, in line with the tropes and devices outlined in Section 4 above. Both (a) and (c) namecheck real-life individuals, prominent at the time, as well as providing a historical context to the events unfolding in the narrative. As for passage (b), it describes the real-life location of SIS headquarters at the time, thereby imparting a degree of verisimilitude to Michael Green’s story. In passage (d), the outlining of the legal positions of the CIA and FBI helps establish the actions that take place in that chapter within a real-life context.<sup>127</sup>

However, having decided to switch from a first-person point of view to the third-person mode, it was important to me not to sacrifice the intimate connection that a reader may develop for a character via the former. Hence, I have written substantial parts of *Cossack* in what, following Zeidner, I call “third-person-aligned” (2021: 21), agreeing with her that, compared to “limited” third person, that term “more accurately describe[s] the purposeful choice to track a character’s perceptions” (32). As far as possible, I have rewritten *Cossack* so that the point of view is clearly attached to a particular character, principally to Michael Green or Mel O’Rourke. As this is now the preeminent form of narration in the novel, there are myriad examples. The very first passage taken from the Prologue may serve to illustrate the point:

Mitchell Masterton opened his front door, stepped out onto the porch and looked up at the sky. The local radio station had predicted a dry day, but Virginia in October was notorious for making monkeys of weather forecasters. Sure enough, the fluffy fair-weather cumulus clouds of the early morning had given way to a lowering sky. He turned and went back into the house, collected his briefcase and took down a raincoat from the rack. He called a goodbye to his wife and shut the door behind him. As he opened the trunk of his Pontiac Firebird, he heard a shout from across the double drive that separated his house from his neighbour’s. A head popped up from behind a hedge. Bob Holloway waved a pair of secateurs at him.

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<sup>127</sup> The question of how far *Cossack* employs the tropes and devices of a “realistic” approach is more fully explored in the next section.

Most of this passage is told quite clearly from Masterton's point of view: it is he who is looking up at the weather, going back into the house, getting in the car, hearing a shout, and so on. It is he who knows how often the weather deceives forecasters. That seems less true of some other sentences: "The local radio . . . lowering sky"; "Bob Holloway . . . at him". But even here, there is nothing happening that Masterton doesn't know about. He has heard the local radio station weather forecast; he knows about the climate in Virginia in October; he has perceived the change in the weather; he sees Holloway waving his secateurs.

There is also a hint here of another technique within the "third-person-aligned" approach, which, as Ann Banfield puts it, "catches something between speech and thought" (1973: 29), that I have employed throughout the novel to encourage the reader to experience the closest possible connection to the characters: free indirect style.<sup>128</sup> Mullan defines it as a technique "by which a novel can marry the narrator's superior knowledge to the character's distinctive viewpoint" (2006: 71). It is a common technique in "realistic" Cold War spy fiction writing. For example, in Allbeury's *The Other Side Of Silence*, on the very first page, Kim Philby is contemplating the Red Flag fluttering over the offices of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow: "It had a beauty and majesty that was undeniable ... It just moved your heart and made you think for a moment of mankind in general" (1982: 7). This is written in the third person and there are no speech marks, but we are not being told something by a detached reporter: these are Philby's sentiments, as is underlined by a sentence that comes between those quoted in the passage above: "It gave him the same feeling he got when they sang 'Land of Hope and Glory' at the last night of the Proms".

Free indirect style is inherently more difficult to identify than direct or indirect speech, which both have their own individual markers. It is generally more subtle as the author seeks to infuse a third-person narration with the perspectives and thought patterns of a particular character. This approach enables the reader to inhabit the consciousness of a protagonist, without the arm's length distancing – "authorial flagging",

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<sup>128</sup> Also known as "free indirect discourse", "free indirect speech" and "close third-person", *inter alia*.



as Wood puts it (2019: 29) – that the continual use of such expressions as “she thought” or “to his mind” is liable to produce.<sup>129</sup>

Applying this analysis to the passage from my prologue cited above demonstrates why it might sometimes be difficult to identify free indirect style. I have maintained that the sentence “but Virginia in October was notorious for making monkeys of weather forecasters” represents a straightforward form of third-person-aligned narration, but it could instead be described as an example of free indirect style. Without it having been written that “Masterton knew that Virginia in October . . .”, the reader is nonetheless inside the character’s head, seeing the world through the prism of his consciousness. In addition, the phrase “making *monkeys* of weather forecasters” is precisely the sort of language Masterton would use.

Elsewhere in the text there are passages which perhaps more clearly illustrate this particular point:

Most agents would have been delighted to be posted to Paris, Rome or Berlin and they would have given their eye teeth for New York or Washington DC. If truth be told, that’s how he’d felt too. But Helsinki was his first permanent assignment (for people in his line of work, ‘permanent’ was a relative term; it just meant anything that wasn’t strictly time-limited), so he couldn’t complain. The fact was, Helsinki was a nice place to live. The people were friendly: if you spoke to anyone who didn’t speak English, they’d go and find someone who did. Capital city it might be, but really, it was just a small town. Small enough to be able to get around comfortably on foot. Yes, the winters could be brutal, even for someone from the north of England.

— Chapter One

In this passage the reader is introduced to Michael Green. Arguably, it begins with a detached external reporter’s point of view, that is, it is not written from the point of view of Green or any other character. It is telling the reader an “objective fact” about the posting preferences of intelligence officers, before switching to an aligned form, as Green divulges his own feelings on the matter. But from “The fact was ...” onwards, the narrative takes on the form of free indirect style. Without being told that Green thinks this or feels that, the reader learns that he enjoys living in Helsinki, that he likes the

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<sup>129</sup> An interesting variation of this approach is found in MacInnes’s *The Salzburg Connection*. The novel is written in the third person throughout, from the point of view of various characters. However, from time to time, when presenting the thoughts and feelings of one of them, she slips into the first person. For example, former British secret service agent, Richard Bryant, is bemoaning, to himself, the meddling of an old colleague, Yates: “He knows perfectly well that anything I find in Finstersee will be handed over to our side ... I had to give him a hint, back in June ... I need his help” (2012: 45).

people, that he regards the city as conveniently compact and that he finds the winter weather “brutal”.

There are many examples of this kind. Here is one taken from the consciousness of Mel O’Rourke:

‘Compromised’. What a weasel word. It made it sound as if they had been caught with their dicks in their hands, not that they’d been tortured for weeks in Moscow, then shot, which was their presumed fate.

— Chapter Ten

The context makes it clear that we are inside O’Rourke’s consciousness and are left in no doubt what her feelings are, but there are no markers to distract the reader, none of what has already been described as “authorial flagging”.

If Zeidner is right, then adopting a third-person-aligned narrative style should reap a dividend in the sense of making *The Cossack Variation* more “realistic” to contemporary readers. For, she argues that, compared with “old-fashioned omniscience”, they “are more trusting of subjective accounts” (2021: 32). It is difficult to see how this proposition may be tested, but there is an inherent logic to it. The argument throughout this thesis has been that designating an approach to spy fiction writing as “realistic” is not to make a statement about its objective status, so much as to describe its subjective effect on the reader. If a writer can persuade the reader that a character’s perceptions and feelings are convincingly her own, then a significant step has been taken in inducting that reader to the writer’s fictional world.

## 2. Writing a “Realistic” Cold War Spy Novel

This section continues the analysis of how far *The Cossack Variation* effectively incorporates the tropes and devices of a “realistic” Cold War spy novel. Section 4 above established the guiding principles of the “realistic” approach: a believable plot; well-drawn characters; evocation of time and place; the creation of verisimilitude by means of reference to real people and events, employment of the “Jackal” approach, focus on the “threat from within”, and an exploration of the moral nature of espionage.

### 2.1 A Believable Plot

The believability or otherwise of a plot is of course in the mind of the reader. *The Cossack Variation* does have the advantage, as we have seen, of being loosely based on real-life events, namely the exploits of the double agents Aldrich Ames and Ryszard Kuklinski. They are represented in *Cossack* by Mitchell Masterton and Pavel Souček respectively. Masterton is a CIA agent, just as Ames was, but whereas Kuklinski was a senior Polish army officer, Souček holds a similar post in the Czech army. Masterton shares many of the character traits of Ames, such as his philandering, heavy drinking and arrogance, and like Ames he marries a Latina woman. Some of what befalls Masterton, such as the botched polygraph tests, the trawling through his trash by the FBI, and his arrest on the way to Langley actually happened to Ames. This is less true of Souček and Kuklinski, though both achieved exfiltration by travelling across the border in packing cases in the back of a mail van.

Much of the plot of *Cossack*, though, is entirely made up: both of the novel’s protagonists, Michael Green and Mel O’Rourke are completely fictitious and in that respect the events that befall them are make-believe. The aim throughout was consciously to develop plotlines that carried the narrative forward effectively, while fulfilling the criteria for a “realistic” spy novel. In the first place, there is some connection to real-life events. Green supervises the exfiltration of Souček, the details of which are based on Kuklinski’s escape to the West; O’Rourke flies to Quito to check the bank records of Masterton’s wife’s family, just as the CIA Office of Security actually sent an investigator to Bogotá to dig into the finances of Ames’s in-laws, albeit without success. Moreover, much of the story consists of painstaking investigation, of a kind that was meat and drink to the Cold War secret service agencies. Equally, the core of the plot of

*Cossack* – the hunt for a mole who has betrayed his country – is hardly outlandish, given the numbers of moles, double-agents and defectors identified during that period. There are two important variations from real life which I deployed in the service of dramatic effect. Firstly, Aldrich Ames actually did betray a number of assets, whereas Mitchell Masterton sold only secrets to the KGB, the betrayal of agents being the work of his boss, Benton Adams, another entirely fictional character. Secondly, the mole-hunt in *Cossack*, undertaken firstly by RACETRACK, then by NIGHTOWL, unfolds far more rapidly than the investigation into Ames.

As we saw previously, for le Carré credibility trumps authenticity. Thus, he felt unable to use certain material, such as the fact that on the same day, two officials received awards from both the West German Chancellor and the Russians. I found myself confronted by a similar dilemma. In Chapter Thirteen, the FBI are trying to keep tabs on Mitchell Masterton. I had been tempted to borrow from a real-life incident in which Ames flummoxed the FBI by his behaviour, because they did not understand the rudiments of the tradecraft an agent would employ, such as leaving or erasing a chalk mark at a signal site in order to inform the agent's handler that a package had been deposited at or removed from a dead-drop site. I decided that no matter how authentic such a scene would have been, readers would have viewed the FBI's ignorance with incredulity.

## **2.2 Well-drawn Characters**

Again, judgement here will be in the gift of the reader. In *Cossack*, I attempt to give the two protagonists – Green and O'Rourke – credible backstories, without overdoing the exposition. Hence, the reader learns a lot about the former through his interactions with other characters, particularly in Part I of the novel, and his behaviour in some of the difficult situations in which he finds himself. For example, Green's first visit to Prague, during which he wanders around the old Jewish Quarter, allows the reader to witness his compassion and sense of history. With O'Rourke, the events that unfold during her visit to Quito remind the reader of her fortitude and strength of character, which were signposted in Chapter Ten, where her background in the FBI is described. In both cases, sometimes through the use of free indirect speech, the reader is given access to their thoughts and feelings.

### 2.3 Evocation of Time and Place

As *Cossack* is set in the early 1980s, it was important to get the technology right: electric typewriters rather than word processors; radios, walkie-talkies and pagers, rather than mobile phones. The cars that appear from time to time are the ones that would have been available in that period, as are the weapons. Equally, when Green goes to MI6 HQ, it is to Century House that he travels not Vauxhall Cross, where the SIS is now housed. A sense of time can also be enhanced by the inclusion of habits or behaviour that were of the period, such as the prevalence of smoking. In addition, there are frequent references to contemporaneous events, such as the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, the attenuation of détente and the rise of *Solidarność*, as well as figures prominent at the time, such as Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Gary Hart, Walter Mondale, Alexander Haig, Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, General Jaruzelski and Margaret Thatcher. Small cultural details also help to evoke the 1980s: O'Rourke reads Robert B Parker; Bob Seger is on the jukebox at the Brickskeller; the Pogues are blaring out from the speakers at O'Rourke's.

In terms of place, the idea was to draw as vivid a picture as possible of Helsinki, Tallinn, Prague, Tampere, Washington DC and Arlington VA. Of course, all of those places will have changed in the last forty years or so, so it was essential to get hold of maps and guide books published in the 1980s. In that way it was possible to inject into the text passages describing the location in question. To take Prague as an example, Green's journey by taxi, in Chapter Four, allows him a first glimpse of the city:

By and large, the view out of the window was uniformly grim, with modern, monotonous tower blocks giving way to rundown, much older suburbs. As they approached the city centre, he could just glimpse the spires of Prague Castle, perched on a hill in Hradčany.

Similarly, the reader is shown another snapshot of the city as Green makes his way to the Red Lion pub, a couple of hundred yards from Wenceslas Square:

Vaclavske Náměstí was still busy, students and tourists wandering around, visiting the shops and enjoying cake and coffee in the cafés, as trams and traffic ran along the boulevard ... A line of lime trees bordered the pavements but were not yet coming into bloom. All along the middle of the thoroughfare was a perfectly regulated flower bed. Not much was showing, but he recognised a carpet of blue-veined white flowers. Russian snowdrops. Well, that was appropriate. The pub, Červený Lev, was still there, the battered Red Lion sign banging in the breeze. In fact, from

the outside, it looked just the same as Green remembered, other than that the distemper on the walls had yellowed and peeled a little more. At first glance, in the dim light of the inadequate ceiling lamps, nothing inside seemed to have changed, either. You walked straight into the bar from the street and were instantly hit by the rival smells of beer, cigarette smoke, cabbage and onions.

In subsection 4.2 in the Analytical Commentary I it was noted that spy fiction writers were able to paint a picture of their favoured location by describing the counter-surveillance measures taken by intelligence officers. That is a device I have employed often in *Cossack*. To take another example from Green's first visit to Prague, this time from Chapter Five, the reader follows him as he travels from his hotel to the restaurant where he is to meet Pavel Souček. This is just a brief excerpt:

He set off in the wrong direction, walking quite quickly along Jindřišska towards the Church of St. Henry. There were people about; it was a busy Monday morning after all, but no one was paying any obvious attention to him. Green paused at the church, apparently absorbed by the material on the information board, before abruptly turning on his heel and setting off back the way he came. A woman, pushing a pram and wearing a shabby winter coat, looked startled. Suddenly, as if he had a change of mind, Green swerved to his right toward Senovážná Náměsti, but before he reached the square, he turned left and dodged into a walkway, then followed his nose through some alleys between the buildings towards the main road. Green thought he'd run out of luck when his only exit between two shops appeared to be blocked by a link fence. In fact, the fence was ripped and he was able to squeeze through, coming out onto the pedestrianised stretch of Na Přikopé, leading to the lower end of Vaclavske Náměsti.

Passages like this confirm the extent to which the secret service officer will go to avoid surveillance, while immersing the reader in the topography of their location.

#### **2.4 Reference to Real People and Events**

In the previous subsection reference was made to a number of real people who appear in *Cossack*. Most of them are merely talked about by characters in the novel, although "C" – Dickie White – who has an important role to play in Chapter Six, actually was the head of the SIS at the time. Reference was also made to actual events which provide a backdrop to the narrative. As McCormick and Fletcher point out, "the use of real events is one of the characteristics of the spy novel which has increased the general realism of its modern form" (1990: 272). Real events do not just play a role in establishing the authenticity of a narrative; they may also be enlisted to help substantiate the

motivations of key characters. Pavel Souček is a case in point. It is crucial to explain to the reader why a high-ranking Czechoslovakian army officer would be prepared to betray his Warsaw Pact allies and potentially his country when he is not greedy for financial reward nor threatened by blackmail. In Souček's case I was able to make reference to such real incidents or events as the Prague Spring, Auschwitz, the industrial decline of Ostrava, the war in Afghanistan, Operation Pegasus, Charter 77, a missile-launching exercise in Kazakhstan, and *Solidarność*. In this way the credibility of Souček's actions and thought-processes is enhanced.

## 2.5 Employment of the "Jackal" Approach

I have defined this approach previously as "the meticulous portrayal of tradecraft, often involving the liberal use of jargon and technical terminology". Tradecraft is a leitmotif of *Cossack*. In Chapter Two, for example, Green visits Tallinn to receive a report from his asset, KERES, about student unrest in Estonia. I could have simply shown the reader the content of that report, perhaps revealed in a conversation between Green and his boss, Norrington. Instead, the reader follows Green to Tallinn and watches him wander through the streets of the old town, where he takes the kind of countersurveillance measures that have become second nature to him. Eventually, he finds his way to the self-service cafeteria where he engages in a variant of a brush pass with KERES, who "accidentally" drops his wallet and concert programme, containing the report, at Green's feet. In this way, the reader is given a feel for clandestine activities that were the bread and butter of an intelligence officer's life. Similarly, in Chapter Five, I chose to go into great detail about Green's journey from his hotel to the restaurant where he was to meet Pavel Souček for the first time. The point here was not only to replicate accurately the intricate measures taken by espionage agents during the Cold War, but also to give a flavour of the jeopardy, real or imagined, that the agents experienced as they undertook their activities. Examples of tradecraft proliferate in *Cossack*, with further instances of countersurveillance measures, as well as references to dead drops, car exchanges, brush passes, signal sites, one-time pads, and so on. Even O'Rourke, an FBI agent, not an intelligence officer per se, adopts some elementary precautions in Quito, inserting a piece of cardboard in the doorjamb of her hotel room and sprinkling some talcum powder on the floor.

As for jargon and technical terminology, these detailed accounts of tradecraft generate their own lexicon, as is evident from the previous paragraph with its references to dead drops and the rest, not to mention the several allusions to “Moscow Rules”. Other examples include the introduction of the acronym “SCIF”, a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility, in Chapter Ten and “exfil packages” in Chapter Fourteen. Equally, descriptions of the equipment used by the protagonists inevitably involves the employment of technical language, although there are relatively few such descriptions in *Cossack*. Green’s dealings with Souček involve clandestine camera work, hence the use by the former of a sub-miniature camera in Chapter Five, and the later exchange of a Minox TLX, the properties of which are described in some detail. Green also hands over a suicide pill, in response to Souček’s request, the pill being hidden in a functioning cigarette lighter. In addition, in Chapter Sixteen, O’Rourke is given a Beretta 92, 9mm semi-automatic pistol.

## **2.6 The Threat from Within**

Deception, betrayal, treason – these were identified in Part One as key tropes in “realistic” Cold War spy novels where the search for moles and the management of defectors represent major narrative arcs. So it is with *Cossack*: at the heart of the story is the search for a double agent embedded in the upper echelons of the CIA, who has been responsible for a score or more assets being unmasked by the KGB, tortured and murdered. In fact, there are two moles involved: Mitchell Masterton who has sold secrets to the KGB, and Benton Adams who is actually COSSACK and has betrayed the assets.

The mole-hunt, central to the narrative though it is, is not the only plotline that features deception and betrayal. Indeed, these themes run throughout the novel. As has already been noted, espionage, insofar as it relies on HUMINT, involves persuading someone to betray secret intelligence. In *Cossack*, a significant part of Michael Green’s working life is concerned with running agents and extracting as much intel from them as possible. This is underlined from the start, where the reader is introduced to his agent BOTVINNIK and made aware of the jeopardy attached to such operations. Later, Green makes contact with KERES in Tallin and cultivates a new source in Helsinki, Shevchenko. A major story arc develops when senior Czechoslovakian army officer Souček offers information to the West and becomes Green’s key asset, PELICAN. Later,



having relocated to Washington DC, Green takes over the running of Russian agent, KOJAK.

## 2.7 The Moral Nature of Espionage

The cases of Masterton, Adams and Souček raise the moral questions often at the heart of the more “realistic” spy novel. Each may be considered to have betrayed their country, to be a traitor, in short, and each is given the opportunity to justify his actions. Masterton is the most cynical of the three. Having been caught leaving secret documents in a dead drop in Rock Creek Park, he finally confesses to O’Rourke and Bettinelli, but shows no signs of remorse:

‘But it wasn’t all chickenfeed, was it?’ said O’Rourke. ‘The KGB paid you a hell of a lot of money. They wouldn’t have done that unless they were getting something important, stuff they really wanted, would they?’

‘Sure, it was stuff they really wanted. They were creaming their pants for it, actually. But important? I don’t think so.’

‘How do you figure that?’ said Bettinelli. ‘You must have been passing highly classified—’

‘Yeah, yeah. But it’s a game, isn’t it? You spy on us, we spy on you. It’s all self-serving. It justifies the existence of thousands of case officers and agents collecting insignificant information, in defence of meaningless secrets. All at great expense.’

There is, therefore, a suggestion here of the belief in the moral equivalency of East and West previously discussed. But in fact, Masterton’s cynicism runs even deeper:

‘That’s why you did it, then?’ said O’Rourke. ‘You thought you knew it didn’t matter, that it was just all a game?’

Masterton laughed. ‘No, Mel. That just *enabled* me to do it. The *reason* I did it is straightforward enough. You said it yourself. They gave me a shitload of money. A *shitload*.’

Adams, too, initially presents a cynical, indeed callous, attitude to the agents whose death resulted from his betrayal, describing them as “collateral damage”:

‘Is that what you tell yourself about the assets who died because of your betrayal? Just “collateral damage”?’ O’Rourke said.

‘Exactly. They knew what they were doing when they signed up for this life. They knew the possible consequences. We all did.’

‘And that makes it okay?’ Green said.

Adams shrugged. ‘Casualties of war.’

However, he offers a more ideological defence of his actions when pressed further:

‘Any day now that warmonger Reagan will launch an offensive and NATO will dispatch Pershing and Tomahawk cruise missiles to rain down on Moscow, and the balloon will go up.’

‘You really believe that?’ said O’Rourke.

‘I do.’

‘Is that why you did it?’ asked McCain. ‘Turn traitor and spied for the Reds?’

‘Traitor? I’m no traitor. In fact, I imagine I’m regarded as quite the hero by my country.’

The accusation that he was a traitor prompts him to further defend his actions:

‘I am not a traitor. My family name is Adamanchuk. I am loyal to my ancestors’ homeland, Ukraine.’

‘Even though it’s nothing more than a vassal state of Russia, now?’ O’Rourke said.

Adams snorted. ‘Bullshit. If it were not for Russia, Ukraine would have become a fascist state under the Nazis. Now, it is only the Soviet Union that provides a bulwark against Western imperialism, against Reagan’s warmongering.’

If Masterton is straightforwardly cynical, and Adams sure in his ideological stance, Souček is much more morally conflicted. Just like them, he could be accused of being a traitor for betraying his country’s secrets to the enemy, but as Green tells C, ‘He wouldn’t see it that way. The reverse, in fact. He’s a patriot’. For Souček, the process of his disillusionment with the Soviet system has been a long time in the making. He describes the different events, cited in the previous subsection, that have contributed to that process as pieces of a jigsaw, ‘And those pieces have piled up, one after another.’ The suppression of Charter 77 and the subsequent crackdown on human rights, the apparent readiness of the Warsaw Pact High Command to strike pre-emptively on the West, the failure of communism to meet the material needs of the people have all shaken his faith in the system. And then came *Solidarność* and the imposition of martial law in Poland: ‘It is what I believe you call the straw that broke the back of a camel’.

Adams’ recourse to the “ends justify the means” rationalisation raises the question of the use of violence more generally. Even in the spy novels most readily placed at the “realistic” end of the spectrum there is almost always some violence involved, or at least the threat thereof. In le Carré’s *Smiley’s People*, for example, early in the narrative Smiley is summoned to identify the body of an émigré leader, Vladimir, bloodily shot to death on Hampstead Heath; attempts are made on the life of Madame

Ostrakova; Otto Leipzig is tortured and beaten to death; Grigoriev is snatched off the street by Esterhase's scalphunters and has to be subdued; and so on. In *Cossack*, it is axiomatic that assets unmasked by the KGB will suffer torture and summary execution, though that is not directly portrayed in the narrative. The two major incidents of the use of deadly force both involve O'Rourke, firstly when she is confronted by an armed KGB operative in Quito and later when she kills Adams after the struggle in his apartment. In both cases, it is clear that she acted in self-defence, but nonetheless understands that these are not matter-of-fact actions, that there is a moral dimension that has to be confronted, that the taking of a life is not without some personal cost.

### 3. “A Recipe for Success”: Suspense in *The Cossack Variation*

*Suspense exists in all narratives; audiences want to know what happens next.*

Robin Anne Reid (1999: 437).

In this section I reflect on how far RQ7 and RQ8 have been answered. These questions refer to the concerns expressed by Goodall and by Goodman on the one hand, and to the challenge posed by Rapp on the other, first raised in the Introduction to this thesis. The first two critics suggest that an attempt consciously to ground a spy novel on the tropes and devices of the “realistic” approach, is unlikely to prove a recipe for success in terms of creating satisfyingly readable fiction. Rapp poses the challenge of keeping spy fiction “realistic” while creating the degree of suspense expected in a thriller. I have previously argued that meeting Rapp’s challenge offers spy fiction a way forward to answering the concern expressed by Goodall and Goodman. Here, I assess how far *The Cossack Variation* may be regarded as a “success”, and what contribution the injection of suspense makes to achieving that goal.

Assessing the success of *Cossack* is far from straightforward. After all, what counts as “success” and how far any particular novel meets the relevant criteria is subjective, dependent on the judgement of the reader. To be sure, anecdotal evidence could be adduced, citing the reaction of those few who have read and commented on *Cossack* to date, but that would be far from satisfactory. However, some more objective criteria may be proposed. A starting point is provided by a remark by Evelyne Keitel, namely that “variations are an essential and characteristic feature of the genre” (quoted in Sabine Vanacker, 1997: 62).<sup>130</sup> She goes on to suggest that these variations occur on two levels, within the genre (“every novel is a rewriting of the novels that preceded it”) and within an author’s work.<sup>131</sup> The former contention is of particular relevance here, given that my aim was to employ the tropes and devices identified in the more “realistic” spy novels that had preceded mine.

The artistic principle of “variations on a theme” is elaborated by Cawelti, who regards it as “one of the fundamental modes of expression in popular culture” (1976:

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<sup>130</sup> Her point is made in reference to detective fiction, but is surely just as applicable to spy fiction,

<sup>131</sup> Keitel’s latter point is consistent with my discussion of the two strands of spy fiction, where I argue that it may be difficult to locate a particular author within the “heroic adventure” or “realistic” strand, because his or her work is likely to have developed over time.

10). Goodall's point was that employing "formulaic components" is unlikely to lead to "anything that will work as a narrative" (2009: 200). Cawelti defines the concept of a formula in a literary context by reference to two common usages, the first denoting "a conventional way of treating some specific thing or person", the second referring to "larger plot types" and "recipes for ... surefire plots" (1976: 5). These two usages he brings together in the conception that "a formula is a combination or synthesis of a number of specific cultural conventions with a more universal story form or archetype" (6). In this context, a formulaic work "creates its own world" (10). In relation to spy fiction, I have argued that even at the most "realistic" end of the spy fiction spectrum, writers do not aim at a mimetic representation of reality. Rather, they create an imaginary world which they hope to persuade readers has the appearance of reality and into which they will willingly enter. Formulaic literature, Cawelti argues, enables the reader to become familiar with this world by repetition. Further, just as I suggested earlier that "formula" and "formulaic" were not necessarily pejorative terms, so he goes on to say that formula literature is not "an inferior or perverted form of something better", but should be seen as "an artistic type with its own purposes and justification" (13). However, that does not mean that an individual formulaic work cannot be flat or turgid. For, "to be work of any quality or interest, the individual version of a formula must have some unique or special characteristics of its own". The creativity involved here is not that of a work that "breaks through the conventions of a particular cultural milieu", but is rather one that "breathes new life" into the format, for example by the way it presents stereotypical characters and situations. The unique or special characteristics "must ultimately work toward the fulfilment of the conventional form" (10-12).

What are the "unique or special characteristics" of *Cossack* which allow a claim of its effectiveness as a narrative? I shall go on to reflect at some length on the elements of suspense that may be identified in the novel, but shall first of all refer briefly to the other relevant characteristics (briefly only because I shall elaborate on them in the next section). I have previously set out how *Cossack* embodies the key elements of a "realistic" Cold War spy novel. That is to say, how it works towards the conventional form. Where it brings what Cawelti calls "new elements" into the formula is by tampering with a conventional spy fiction plotline and reinvigorating stereotypical

character types. At the heart of *Cossack* is a mole-hunt, common enough in Cold War spy literature. However, unusually, readers would believe that the identity of the mole has been revealed right from the beginning, in the Prologue. Thus, the story is not the normal whodunnit, focusing on how the investigation unmasks the traitor. There is, though, a twist in the denouement. As for the characters, many are conventional figures, readily recognisable, for example, as arrogant, entitled, male secret service officers. Michael Green, on the other hand is working-class and culturally Jewish, and most significantly of all, his co-protagonist is a female FBI agent who has to deal with misogyny and patronisation.

Above all, however, note must be taken of Cawelti's assertion that formulaic stories must be treated as "artistic constructions created for the purpose of enjoyment and pleasure" (1976: 2). And, as he goes on to say, in accordance with my own line of argument, one of the key devices in the skilful writer's armoury is suspense.

I now turn to an assessment of how successfully I have incorporated the elements of suspense previously identified, namely, danger; the waiting game; the enemy within; and tradecraft.

### **3.1 Danger**

As fundamentally the story of a mole-hunt, *Cossack* involves considerable periods of intelligence officers sitting around discussing the case, ploughing through files and interviewing suspects. However, I found a number of opportunities to inject action sequences with uncertain outcomes likely to engender suspense. Most obviously, at the end of Part I of the novel, Green finds himself under surveillance by, he suspects, the Czechoslovakian secret service. After a game of cat and mouse, he is run down in the street. The reader does not know if he is alive or dead, and her anxiety is surely heightened when Part II introduces O'Rourke as a new protagonist.

It seemed to me that she too needed to be put in jeopardy, just as Green had. To be sure, there is a passage where she visits Quito and has to confront attempted muggers, but that scene is less about creating suspense – although the reader might well be anxious about the outcome – but more about cementing her character as a tough and resilient operator, well capable of looking after herself. More to the point, then, was the addition of the episode in which, after her night out with Juan Morales in Quito,

O'Rourke discovers an intruder in her hotel room. The suspense is built up gradually. She discovers that the cardboard she'd stuck between the door and the jamb, and the talcum powder she'd sprinkled on the floor had been disturbed, and we follow her as she takes off her shoes, draws her gun, and quietly makes her way into the room. She can dimly make out the presence of someone in the bedroom, who alerted to her presence reaches for his gun. At that point, the reader cannot know how that situation will be resolved and will surely be anxious about her safety.

Perhaps the most suspenseful scenes in the book occur when Green undertakes the exfiltration of Pavel Souček. First of all, there are anxious moments when Green attempts to collect Souček and his family and deliver them to the British Embassy. Then the reader follows them on a hair-raising night-time journey through Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic, a journey that involves a tense stand-off at the border.

There is a further, crucial action sequence towards the end of the narrative, when Benton Adams holds Green, O'Rourke and McCain captive at gunpoint. The final burst of action takes place quickly, but the denouement is reached relatively slowly as Adams takes the time to engage his adversaries in conversation, taking the opportunity to justify his behaviour. The reader, who one hopes is invested in the characters, particularly Green and O'Rourke, does not know what the outcome will be. She may expect that "good" will triumph over "evil", but she cannot rely on that expectation. Indeed, McCain loses his life in the ensuing struggle.

### **3.2 The Waiting Game**

The prime example in *Cossack* of an intelligence officer waiting anxiously for an agent occurs towards the beginning of the narrative. Green's "joe", Oleg, has left him a message in a dead drop warning of a possible mole in the Western intelligence services. Green is desperate for more intel, but Oleg fails to make their scheduled meeting. He tells himself "There could be all sorts of reasons to explain Oleg's non-appearance", but he is clearly anxious and so should be the reader.

There are also examples of the waiting game, not involving an intelligence officer's asset. Once Green and O'Rourke have settled on Adams as their prime suspect in the quest for COSSACK, we see them taking turns to undertake surveillance outside his

apartment block. The reader may well be anxious in case they are discovered and wonder what the consequences of such a discovery would be. Further, in one such incident at night, Green is present when a taxi pulls up and disgorges its occupant. A woman descends. Will it be someone known to the reader, or just a girlfriend of Adams? In fact, in a crucial turn of events, it turns out to be Rosalita, Mitchell Masterton's wife. Later, when Green is again outside Adams' apartment, this time keeping watch as O'Rourke and McCain search it, there is always the possibility that Adams will return unexpectedly, and this is in fact what happens.

### 3.3 The Enemy Within

In theory, this could have been the most fruitful area for me to generate suspense, just as in, for example, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, where the reader is desperate to learn the identity of the mole, and much of the dramatic tension in the narrative is created by the painstaking investigation carried out by Smiley and his team. However, I had created a problem for myself at the very beginning, for, unlike in *Tinker Tailor* where the identity of the mole is not revealed until the very end, my prologue appears to unmask Mitchell Masterton as the traitor. Thus, for a large part of the narrative, the reader cannot feel the suspense normally derived from the solving of a "whodunnit".<sup>132</sup> There is a connection here to the previous discussion about repeaters: can the reader of *Cossack* still feel suspense even though she knows (or believes she knows) who the mole is? If the answer is yes, then the explanation will once again be found in the reader's deep involvement with the characters, in this case from experiencing the setbacks and breakthroughs of the investigative taskforce and thereby living the highs and lows encountered by the protagonists. The tension, in this case, derives from the *how* of the discovery of the mole. There is a connection here to the crime novel, particularly the detective story, as, in *Cossack* as well as other spy novels, secret service officers sift through intelligence, building a picture of the case that confronts them, seeking the "clues" that will help them solve the problem that confronts them.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Or, what Lodge describes as the question of "causality", as opposed to the question of "temporality", for example, "what will happen next?" (2011: 14).

<sup>133</sup> Indeed, Winks maintains that the borders between spy fiction and crime fiction more generally have blurred. As spy stories became increasingly concerned with paranoia about "the enemy within", so "spy fiction began to take on elements of the puzzle story or of mystery fiction" (1993: 232).



In addition, however, there is the twist to the story. Masterton has indeed betrayed his country, selling secrets to the KGB, but he has not betrayed the assets; he is not, in fact, COSSACK. This creates uncertainty in the mind of the reader: if Masterton isn't COSSACK, then who is? Once it is revealed that Benton Adams is the traitor, the suspense resides in whether he will be caught. That suspense is heightened in the action sequence referred to above.

*Cossack* also showcases the deception and duplicity that is implicit in spy fiction and is accentuated where the focus is on the enemy within. Can the reader, who believes that Masterton is a traitor from the outset, believe anything that he says? Is he telling the truth when he is interviewed by the taskforce, or during his polygraph sessions? Where *did* he get all his money from? Did he betray the assets, or not? If not, who did? Green is confident that Souček is the real deal, not a KGB plant, but as he tells C, he couldn't be one hundred per cent certain.

Then there is the deception practised by Adams. Of course, all his actions as a CIA officer are duplicitous, as he is an agent of the KGB, but his masterstroke, as a piece of *maskirovka*, the art of deception, is the invention of source SEABISCUIT, designed to confuse and divert the attention of the British and American intelligence services.

### **3.4 Tradecraft**

The incident in which Green is run down by a car follows a detailed account of the countersurveillance measures he takes in his attempt to throw off his pursuers. This aspect of tradecraft features throughout the narrative, particularly in Part I. Hence, the first time Green goes to meet Pavel Souček, later to become his asset PELICAN, he undertakes a complicated and time-consuming set of manoeuvres designed to shake off any surveillance. Throughout that journey, on foot and on the metro, there is an aura of danger. This reaches a culmination at the Old Jewish Cemetery, where Green fears he is being followed by a man in a leather coat, and at the Red Lion pub where he is seized by anxiety at the appearance of two men, also in leather coats. The point here is to establish an atmosphere of doubt, anxiety and trepidation which is mirrored in the mind of the reader. The boot is on the other foot in Chapter Twenty-One, when O'Rourke follows a figure she believes to be Adams. Again, the stakes are high and the risk significant.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In revising successive drafts of *Cossack*, in the light of feedback from the supervisory team, I have been able to make minor changes in order to increase further the measure of suspense in the text. For example, in the final draft, the revelation that Adams is COSSACK comes much later than in previous iterations. In addition, I have tried to sow more seeds of doubt in the conversations between the various agents and intelligence officers. But these modifications add gloss to the principal objective of injecting periods of suspense throughout the narrative of *The Cossack Variation*. The key criterion of whether the novel works as a spy thriller is contained in the epigraph to this section. Does *Cossack* persuade readers to “want to know what happens next”?

## 4. A Reflection on an Original Contribution to Knowledge and Practice

*“Outcomes” of artistic research are necessarily unpredictable.*

Estelle Barret (2019a: 3)

The Introduction to this thesis rehearsed the idea, following Barrett, that a claim of originality depends upon “small advances on previous ideas and practice”. In this section I set out what small advances were achieved, firstly in the novel, *Cossack*, that constitutes the Creative Writing Portfolio, secondly, in the Analytical Commentary I and thirdly, in the interrelationship between the Commentary and *Cossack*.

### 4.1 The Creative Writing Portfolio (*Cossack*)

In the case of the novel, some small advances are discernible on what Gaylene Perry calls “the surface of the creative work” (2019: 35). These advances are manifested in three ways: (1) As a fresh configuration of the “mole-hunt” spy novel; (2) By weaving fiction and reality together; (3) Most significantly, by challenging deeply ingrained stereotypes in Cold War spy fiction.

#### 4.1.1 *The Mole-Hunt Spy Novel*

*Cossack* represents a fresh configuration of the “mole-hunt” spy novel, of which to be sure there are many examples. In le Carré’s classic rendition, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the reader learns quite quickly of the existence of a mole, but his identity is not revealed until the penultimate chapter, a blueprint followed by most other writers. *Cossack* breaks this mould, apparently revealing the identity of the traitor in the Prologue, where Masterton is arrested by the FBI.<sup>134</sup> Thus, the novel appears to be less of a “whodunnit” than a “how-do-they-catch-him”, although the twist at the end reveals that all is not quite as it seems.<sup>135</sup>

#### 4.1.2 *Weaving Fiction and Reality Together*

The novel, as has previously been discussed, is loosely based on the exploits of real-life double agents, Aldrich Ames and Ryszard Kuklinski. There are some spy novels which

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<sup>134</sup> Paul Franklin is revealed as a double agent working for the KGB at the beginning of Victor Marchetti’s *The Rope-Dancer*, but that novel is not the story of a mole-hunt, but of the tortuous process that Franklin must undergo to protect his identity. Something similar could be said of Graham Greene’s *The Human Factor* and Derek Marlowe’s *A Dandy in Aspice*.

<sup>135</sup> It is also a “whodunnit”, that is, it answers the question “what makes the mole behave the way he does?”, a question, as McCormick and Fletcher remark, “in which readers are deeply interested” (1990: 279) and has thus exercised other writers.

may be characterised as *romans á clef*, such as Banville's *The Untouchables*, where many readers will readily identify the real people disguised under fictitious names, and others where historical figures appear as characters in their own right, such as Williams' *Gentleman Traitor* and, above all, Littell's *The Company* and Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost*. *Cossack*, however, treads a different path, fictionalising historical material within an original, coherent narrative. The lives of Ames and Kuklinski provided the springboard for the creative imagination. It was reading about Ames that provided the original inspiration for the novel; not only was he the KGB's most productive mole within the CIA of all time, the failure of the Agency to recognise his treachery for many years was extraordinarily fascinating. As for Kuklinski, he was by no means the only high-ranking figure from behind the Iron Curtain to spy for the West, but nearly all the other famous ones – Golitsyn, Gordievksy, Polyakov, Yurchenko, Martynov, Motorin – were Russians. Yet, according to Michael Smith, Kuklinski, a Polish officer, was “the spy who produced the most important intelligence on Soviet military intentions during the 1970s and early '80s” (2019: 126). Most writers of Cold War spy novels that feature moles, double agents or defectors choose agents from the Soviet Union.<sup>136</sup> I chose to model Pavel Souček on Kuklinski partly because of his importance, but also because I wanted to feature a character from a “satellite” Iron Curtain country. This enabled me to shine a light on the attitude of a high-ranking official having to confront the domination of the Soviet Empire, particularly in the context of the crushing of the Prague Spring. Further, Souček's justification of his actions could stand as a counterbalance to the defence mounted by *Cossack*, Benton Adams, a third-generation Ukrainian. In addition, I was struck by the dramatic possibilities afforded by Kuklinski's dangerous escape from Warsaw on the brink of his discovery, an escape I transformed into Souček's hazardous journey from Prague to Berlin, one of the key chapters in the novel.

We have seen that in *The Cossack Variation* Ames and Kuklinski are portrayed in the novel by Mitchell Masterton and Pavel Souček, respectively, the latter transferred in the novel to the Czechoslovakian Army. Much of Masterton's behaviour – his heavy drinking, his marriage to a Latina woman, his arrogance, and so on – are informed by the actual behaviour of Ames. As for Souček, his devotion to his homeland and his

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<sup>136</sup> MacInnes is a rare exception, featuring, in *Ride a Pale Horse*, a Czech defector, Pavel Vasek.

dismay at the suppression of dissent, parallels Kuklinksis's insistence that he was a patriot, repulsed by the Soviet Union's crackdown on *Solidarność* (Weiser, 2004).

In consequence, *Cossack* may be regarded as partly "factional" in the sense conceived by McCormick and Fletcher (1990: 10), but is probably better characterised by a phrase used by James Purdon in his commentary on Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*: "fiction and reality weave together" (2012: 540). To the best of my knowledge, no other novel writers have based their work on these real-life cases.

#### **4.1.3 Challenging Stereotypes**

*Cossack* challenges deeply ingrained stereotypes in Cold War spy fiction in three ways. Firstly, as was explained in the Introduction, the story is set in the early 1980s, which is extremely rare, if not unique, among recent writings which tend to focus on the 1960s. Even among contemporaneous narratives the 1980s are a relatively neglected period. In the Context section of the Introduction, I addressed the question of whether *Cossack* should be regarded as historical fiction, noting the difficulties involved in employing that concept. What is undoubtedly the case is that I never consciously set out to write historical fiction, having no intention in trying to engage the reader with what de Groot regards as fundamental to the genre, namely a "set of tropes, settings and ideas that are particular, alien and strange" (4). Following the fracturing of détente, renewed tension and paranoia arose which the novelist, with the benefit of hindsight, can portray.<sup>137</sup> The influence of what James Jesus Angleton designates as the "wilderness-of-mirrors" years, the rise of *Solidarność* and the imposition of martial law in Poland, and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, all provide an atmospheric backdrop for the events in the novel. Yet, rather than presenting a vision that is "alien and strange", *Cossack* aims at kindling contemporaneous resonances in the reader,<sup>138</sup> given we now live in a world where tension and paranoia have recently reached such a pitch as to inspire commentators to suggest the emergence of another New Cold War involving a

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<sup>137</sup> In my case, I was also able to draw on my own experiences and memories, particularly in relation to protests in support of *Solidarność*.

<sup>138</sup> Winks does make a significant point that at the time he was writing it could be argued that most spy fiction, and *Cossack* would be included in that category, should be regarded as historical fiction in one particular sense. That is, it is "about intelligence work conducted in a manner no longer practiced". Most spy fiction concerns "Humint" – human intelligence – while the real world of espionage has shifted towards "Sigint" – signals intelligence and electronic surveillance. "Virtually all spy fiction", he goes on to say, "is about human beings taking risks, being foolish, being treacherous" (1993: 233).

partnership between Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Hence, for example, Elliot Abrams of the Council on Foreign Relations insists that a "new struggle has been thrust upon us by Russia and China", a struggle that echoes the Cold War in that it is "fundamentally an ideological conflict between the forces of liberty and the powers that would snuff it out" (2022: 10/11). Spy fiction is particularly well-placed to explore these geopolitical developments, focusing as it does on the clandestine machinations behind the scenes of international conflict. Setting *Cossack* in the 1980s, then, presents the reader with a glimpse of history that connects quite dramatically to the present.

Whether or not *Cossack* may properly be regarded as historical fiction, it is a fact that it is set forty years or so ago. That fact, together with other markers in the text, invites consideration of how the work relates to literary postmodernism. For, as Linda Hutcheon insists, while a precise definition of that term is problematic, it must involve a "self-conscious dimension of history" (1989: 3). That dimension is certainly present in *Cossack*, not just in the sense of its 1980s setting, but in the conscious choices I made to include period-specific indicators: the music in the background, the prevalence of smoking, the makes of car involved, the limited technology available and so on. Moreover, as has previously been explained, *Cossack* is loosely based on the real-life stories of Aldrich Ames and Ryzard Kuklinski. In that respect, it represents an "adaptation". To the ordinary reader or audience-member, that term is more likely to evoke, say, the idea of a novel or short-story adapted for the stage or screen, or a play turned into a musical. But as Hutcheon points out, "adaptation" is an appropriate term to describe a work that draws on "an historical event or an actual person's life" (2013: 43). The final product, following a process of "appropriating or salvaging", represents "a double process of interpreting and then creating something new" (46). As my narrative is not based on or adapted from a specific prior work, and given that the potential readership is unlikely to know much if anything about Ames or Kuklinski, I could count on an "unknowing audience" and thus did not have to "worry about adhering to the details" (142). With any adaptation there is inevitably a mixture of repetition and difference, or as Hutcheon goes on to remark, "repetition without replication" (167). To take one example, just like Kuklinski, Pavel Souček is a high-ranking officer in the armed forces of

the Warsaw Pact, but he has been transposed from the Polish to the Czechoslovakian army.

There is another dimension to be found in *Cossack* that is relevant here, a concept that, as Jonathan Culler puts it, “goes by the fancy notion of ‘intertextuality’” (1997: 34). Elaine Martin, while noting the term’s “current association with postmodernism”, argues that its meaning is not agreed, even if most critics assign its origin to Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s (2011: 148).<sup>139</sup> Culler, following Kristeva, offers a simple definition: “the relation of a particular text to other texts” (1975: 139).<sup>140</sup> Although there is no specific prior text underpinning the adaptation, *Cossack* does draw on biographical accounts and reportage. Thus, some of Mitchell Masterton’s character traits and dialogue reflect those of Ames; equally, some of Souček’s opinions and beliefs are based on Kuklinski’s. In addition, a number of the incidents and events in the novel, most notably Souček’s flight from Prague to West Berlin, are informed by historical accounts. Moreover, however subconsciously, *Cossack*, in its detailed employment of the lexicon of tradecraft, draws upon the many Cold War spy fiction novels studied as part of the research for this project.

Nonetheless, an attempt to ascribe a postmodern reading to *Cossack* would be a stretch. In the first place, I did not set out to be one of the “many contemporary writers” who “consciously imitate, quote, plagiarize, parody ... extensively” (Martínez Alfaro, 1996: 271). These are all features commonly associated with postmodern literature. Indeed, as Hutcheon observes, “What we call postmodernism in literature today is usually characterized by intense self-reflexivity and overtly parodic intertextuality”. In fiction, therefore, postmodernism is usually equated with “metafiction” (1989: 3). Given, as we have already seen, Hutcheon also insists on an essential historical dimension to literary postmodernism, she designates this approach to fiction as “historiographic metafiction”. David Lodge provides a straightforward definition of this second term: “Metafiction is fiction about fiction: novels and stories that call attention to their fictional status and their own compositional procedures” (2011: 206).

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<sup>139</sup> That is not to suggest that the *phenomenon* of intertextuality originated at that time. As María Jesús Martínez Alfaro shows, theories of what has come to be called intertextuality can be traced back at least as far as Plato (1996: 269).

<sup>140</sup> Hutcheon talks about “the dialogic relations among texts” (2013: 11).

Moreover, echoing Hutcheon, Lodge goes on to observe that “Metafictional writers ... like to undermine more orthodox fiction by means of parody” (208). Of course, spy fiction has lent itself to parody over many years. John Attridge, for example, argues that Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* is “a parody of sensational Edwardian spy literature” (2013: 125). More recently, John Gardner, who himself became one of the authors to pick up the cudgels of writing James Bond stories after Fleming’s death, produced a series of comic novels, beginning with *The Liquidator* (1964). The books feature the inept and cowardly Boysie Oakes, conceived by the author as “an amusing counter-irritant to the excesses of 007” (Lowther, 1980: 634).<sup>141</sup> To take as another example a female author writing during the Cold War, Dorothy Gilman’s Emily Pollifax series ran to fourteen volumes between 1966-2000. Mrs Pollifax, “one of the few females in spy fiction” (McCormick and Fletcher, 1990: 110) is something of a Miss Marple figure, routinely underestimated, yet sharp of mind, keen of eye and indefatigable of spirit. Rosie White describes the books as “comic thrillers, gently satirising the conventions of 1960s spy fiction” (2007: 80). Parody, of course, suggests imitation, and it is certainly the case that *Cossack* might legitimately be regarded as an homage to the “realistic” spy novels of the Cold War. However, it implies something more, although not the ludicrous caricature which Culler describes as “burlesque” (1975: 152) and might appropriately be applied, for example, to Mabel Maney’s Jane Bond series. Nor does there have to be exaggerated ridicule; but the idea of parody only makes sense in the presence of what Hutcheon calls “ironic difference” (1986-87) or what her adversary, Fredric Jameson, labels a “satiric impulse” (1991: 17). *Cossack* displays none of these features.

The fundamental objective of this project was to elaborate the meaning of “realistic” Cold War fiction and, having identified the essential elements of that approach, faithfully to apply those elements to a spy novel, thereby testing the proposition that to do so would prevent the production of a fluent, readable narrative. Hence, *Cossack*

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<sup>141</sup> The Bond stories were ripe for parodying. For example, Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott describe Kingsley Amis’s *Colonel Sun* (1968), one of the first Bond novels written after Fleming’s death, as “self-consciously and playfully parodic” (1987: 87). Of course, as we saw in Subsection 1.2 of the first part of the commentary, there is a school of thought who maintain that Fleming’s Bond stories are themselves parodies. However, whereas Conrad, Gardner and Amis are presumed to have deliberately taken aim at their respective targets and their works are accepted on that basis, there is no doubt that when Snyder, Rimington and others describe the Bond stories as “parodic”, they mean to do so pejoratively.



does not represent a consciously self-reflexive or parodic text: the authorial voice does not intervene to address the reader; the author is not a character in the narrative; no attempt is made to subvert the conventions of the spy fiction genre – quite the reverse; it is not a story about writing a story; there is no ironic or satiric intent; and, of critical importance, there is no attempt to foreground “the gap between art and life that conventional realism seeks to conceal” (Lodge, 2011: 207). In short, I share the sentiments of the veteran Australian author Gerald Murnane who has said in relation to his highly acclaimed novel, *Inland*, that “It certainly wasn’t postmodernism that drove me to write [it]”.<sup>142</sup>

The second challenge relates to the fact that intelligence officers in “realistic” Cold War spy novels are nearly always white men: WASPS in the USA, public schoolboys in the UK.<sup>143</sup> On the other hand, as was pointed out in the previous section, one of the two protagonists in *Cossack*, Michael Green, is a grammar-school boy from a working-class background, and culturally Jewish to boot. The former factor operates as an undercurrent throughout the passages in which Green is involved, particularly in his interactions with his elders and betters. The latter plays a significant role in the development of his character, most notably in the passages from Chapter Three, where he visits the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague, and also colours his relationship with his asset, PELICAN (Pavel Souček).<sup>144</sup>

Thirdly, there is what I regard as the key innovative element of the novel, the foregrounding, in contradistinction to nearly all other male Cold War spy fiction writers, of a female lead character. As I explained previously, I decided to feature Mel O’Rourke, a female FBI agent assigned to the intelligence department, as one of the two protagonists.<sup>145</sup> In Section 1.2 in this part of the commentary we noted Priscilla Walton’s observation that most secret-service agencies are male dominated and that this fact is reflected in spy fiction. As Hepburn observes, “the plot of espionage novels character-

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<sup>142</sup> Murnane was answering questions from Chris Power on BBC Radio 4’s *Open Book*, broadcast on Sunday, 21 January, 2024. He added that “Not only am I not a postmodernist, I wouldn’t know a postmodernist if he sat down beside me”.

<sup>143</sup> Notable exceptions are Deighton’s unnamed hero of *The Ipcress File* and its sequels, and Brian Freemantle’s Charlie Muffin.

<sup>144</sup> There is also an autobiographical element to Green’s character, which I explore below.

<sup>145</sup> O’Rourke is not unique, in that Lauren Wilkinson’s Marie Mitchell is also an FBI intelligence agent active during the Cold War. However, she does not engage directly with the countries of the Warsaw Pact; *American Spy* (2019) is set in Burkina Faso.

istically excludes women unless needed as *femmes fatales* or dupes” (2005: 198). The exclusion of women is markedly less the case with regard to film and TV. James Chapman notes that during the 1960s and early 1970s the prominence of secret agents and other unusual crime fighters was “one of the distinctive features of the landscape of British television” (2002: 1). One consequence of what he goes on to describe as a “glut” of secret agent adventure series was that space was created for female protagonists.<sup>146</sup> Rosie White lists *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.*, *Charlie’s Angels* and *Honey West* in the USA, and *The Champions*, *Department S* and *The Avengers* in the UK.<sup>147</sup> *The Avengers* is the most notable, running from 1961-69 and showcasing successively three dynamic, intelligent, physically formidable women in Cathy Gale (Honor Blackman), Emma Peel (Diana Rigg) and Tara King (Linda Thorson). It should also be noted that all three could be described as “easy on the eye”, going some way to fulfilling White’s description of women spies as “hermaphrodite heroes combining hyperfeminine appearance with masculine activities” (2007: 9).<sup>148</sup>

Returning to the case of the espionage novel, Wesley K. Wark takes further Walter’s observation, claiming that the most obvious problem facing the spy thriller in the future is that “it remains a resolutely masculinist genre”. For, “its principal authors are male, its fictional characters are mostly male, and the world of high politics and covert operations that it describes is male” (1998: 1215). Taking his second point first, there are, of course, many female characters in spy novels. But spy fiction is generally deeply conservative, tending to uphold prevailing values and social structures, focusing as it does on institutions and organisations rooted in tradition and defence of the status quo, epitomised by the old-boy network. Often, female characters fulfil traditional

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<sup>146</sup> It would be too simplistic to suggest that this “glut” was a response to the success of the James Bond films, for, as Chapman points out, both *Danger Man* and *The Avengers* predated the release of *Dr NO* in 1962. Nonetheless, “the Bond films were very influential” (2002: 12).

<sup>147</sup> All of these programmes may fairly be described as “adventure” series, often with tongue firmly in cheek. More recently, a chillingly realistic series, *The Americans*, ran for six seasons from 2013 to 2018. Set between 1981 and 1987, the series follows the lives of two married KGB officers living in the USA as “sleepers” who carry out espionage on orders from Moscow. Elizabeth Jennings, portrayed by Keri Russell, plays as much of a leading role as her husband.

<sup>148</sup> White applies this characterisation particularly to Jaime Sommers (Lindsay Wagner) who starred as *The Bionic Woman* (1976-78) and Purdey (Joanna Lumley) who succeeded Gale et al in *The New Avengers* (1976-77). She goes on to describe Alexandra Bastedo, who plays the part of Sharron Macready in *The Champions* as “eye candy” and reports that Rosemary Nichols, Annabelle Hirst in *Department S*, felt she was only there to add glamour (2007: 67-8).

women's roles such as secretaries, filing clerks, typists, personal assistants, wives and girl-friends, or they are, as Phyllis Lassner puts it, "either disposable attractions or damsels in distress" (2016: 107), to be rescued by the hero, as Vivienne Michel is in Fleming's *The Spy Who Loved Me*.<sup>149</sup> As Walton points out, Fleming's "misogynistic" portrayals of women tend to involve "ugly lesbians" or "beauties who serve primarily as toys of sexual pleasure" (1998: 654). True, there have been female spies throughout the history of spy fiction, particularly during the two world wars, but as Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan observe, they have often been portrayed as vamps or temptresses (1986: 52-70).<sup>150</sup> In Somerset Maugham's *Ashenden*, for example, the eponymous hero uses Giulia Lazzari, a Spanish dancer who is working for the Central Powers against the Allies, as bait to catch a greater prize, the Indian spy, Chandra. After the Second World War, Craig and Cadogan argue, "girl spies" have been "transformed into superwomen send-ups ... marked by increasing fantasy" (13-14). Peter O'Donnell's Modesty Blaise is the template here.<sup>151</sup> To have a female lead in a "realistic" spy novel written during the Cold War is very rare indeed. In fact, Walton insists that women are "suspect" in spy thrillers, particularly Fleming's, but also Le Carré's (1998: 654).<sup>152</sup> Nor do more recently

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<sup>149</sup> It is also the case, as Christine Bold observes, that "Bond Girls", such as Pussy Galore and Domino Vitale, sometimes "repay the compliment", snatching the hero from the jaws of death (2003: 172).

<sup>150</sup> Julie Wheelwright, in her discussion of real-life female spies, in particular Mata Hari and Ursula Kuczynski (aka "Sonja"), introduces the notion of "the spy-courtesan": "The female agent, in both espionage fiction and intelligence history, is most often sexualised, and her role confined to seducing the enemy" (2019: 5). While her focus is primarily historical, she concludes that "the spy-courtesan still has great resonance" (16). That view is supported by, for example, *American Spy*, Lauren Wilkinson's novel referred to in note 145 above. FBI agent Marie Mitchell's mission is to seduce the communist president of Burkina Faso.

<sup>151</sup> In something of the same vein, David Brierley has produced a series featuring "Cody", a CIA-trained female assassin. On screen, Luc Bresson's film *Nikita* (1990) spawned a number of spin-off films and TV series, in various countries, most notably the Canadian-produced *La Femme Nikita* (1997-2001) and the USA creation *Nikita* (2010-13). In all these productions Nikita is portrayed as "a drug addict and criminal rehabilitated by an intelligence organisation to serve the state as an elite assassin" (White, 2007: 105). More recently, in the UK, the BBC turned Luke Jennings' Villanelle novels into a TV series, *Killing Eve*, (2018-22) with Jodie Comer playing the role of a professional assassin.

<sup>152</sup> Bernie Samson's wife, Fiona, does play a significant role in the development of the plot in Deighton's nine-book series, but mainly off-stage. Moreover, she is undoubtedly "suspect" as she is apparently a defector and double-agent. It is also clearly the case that Bernie is the lead character. In addition, Fiona fulfils two of White's dictums. In the first place, her "hyperfeminine appearance" is stressed throughout, with multiple references to her beauty, to her proclivity for expensive clothes and perfume, and to her attention to her hair and make-up. Secondly, White maintains that a woman spy "is rarely depicted as maternal" (2007: 1). Fiona has convinced herself that she "had never been a very good mother", because she "had never liked babies", appalled by "their endless demands" (*Spy Sinker*, 1991: 85). However, Fiona is also depicted as a dedicated intelligence officer, a high achiever and an extremely capable, accomplished woman. She carries off pretending to be a KGB double-agent for years before her fake

published writers deviate much from this pattern. Tim Glister stands out for introducing CIA recruit Abey Bennett in *Red Corona* (2021), but she plays second fiddle to SIS officer Robert Knox.<sup>153</sup>

As for Wark's first point, the maleness of spy fiction authors, he correctly notes that the genre has not experienced "a wave of feminist writing as has occurred in detective and crime fiction" (1215). For, in line with the changing role of women in society, including an emerging presence in law enforcement, the 1970s saw detective fiction, particularly novels written by women, begin to feature professional female private investigators. In 1972, P. D. James introduced Cordelia Gray in what Maureen T. Reddy describes as "the first modern novel to feature a female private detective" (2003: 195), though it is telling that she chose to call it *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*. Later in that decade, Marcia Muller's *Edwin of the Iron Shoes*, introducing Sharon McCone, proved a breakthrough, opening the door for the emergence in the 1980s of a flood of hard-boiled private eye novels written by women featuring female protagonists. Pre-eminent were Sarah Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski novels and Sue Grafton's alphabet series showcasing Kinsey Milhone, both of which were also set in the USA.<sup>154</sup>

There have been women writers who have written Cold War spy novels during the 1970s and 1980s, but few have achieved much success, the most acclaimed undoubt-

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defection and spends several years in East Berlin as an SIS asset. According to SIS grandee Silas Gaunt, "Fiona Samson has proved the best agent in place the Department has ever had" (*Sinker*: 340).

<sup>153</sup> Paul Vidich's primary protagonist is George Mueller, introduced in 2016; P J Anderson's is Augustus Benedict (2021); Edward Wilson's is Catesby (2008); David Holman's is Alex Swan (2016); J D Narramore's is Carson Cooper (2020); Nick Elliot's is Angus McKinnon (2014); Serhii Plokhyy's is Bogdan Stashinsky (2016); Andrew William's is Harry Vaughn (2019), and so on. Vidich does introduce a female agent in the more recent *Mercenary* (2021), but Natasha is a disenchanted KGB agent, who plays second fiddle to the main character, Alex Garin. Natasha serves to substantiate Walton's claim (directed at Helen MacInnes) that "When (or if) women appear, they are almost inevitably relegated to minor positions or, alternatively, constructed as enemy agents" (1998: 658). There are male authors writing today who feature women agents as protagonists, such as Mick Herron's *Slow Horses* series (2010) which introduces several strong female characters and Dan Fesperman's *Claire Saylor* novels (2021). In both cases, the action takes place after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Even V. M. Knox, one of the very few women writing spy fiction today, features Alistair Quinn (2023). Andrew Turpin's *The Kremlin's Voice* is the first in a series featuring Jayne Robinson, formerly an officer in the SIS, but it is set in 2015, not the Cold War.

<sup>154</sup> Other American PIs introduced at that time include Susan Steiner's *Alexandra Winter*, Linda Barnes's *Carlotta Carlisle*, Linda Grant's *Catherine Saylor*, T. J. MacGregor's *Quin St. James*, Eva Zaremba's *Helen Kerembos*, and Lauren Wright Douglas's *Caitlin Reece*. Notable in the UK was Lisa Cody's *Anna Lee*. According to Reddy, more than 200 new series of detective novels of various kinds written by women authors began, most towards the end of the decade, "with the huge majority featuring female protagonists" (2003: 201).

edly being the “Queen of the Spy Novel”, Helen MacInnes. Even she tends to feature male intelligence operatives as the lead actors, although her female characters are more than cyphers.<sup>155</sup> Most of her novels are not set in the Cold War, though her last one, *Ride a Pale Horse* (1984), is. In it, Karen Cornell plays an instrumental role in organising the attempted defection of a high-level Czech official but she is a journalist, not a professional intelligence operative or law enforcement officer. One other significant female spy fiction writer who does feature a woman as a professional secret service officer in her four-volume series – Davina Graham – is Evelyn Anthony.<sup>156</sup> Anthony insists she seeks “only to entertain” (Mussell, 1980: 38) and certainly the first novel, *The Defector*, is relatively lightweight and pays scant attention to a feminist perspective, although she does have male characters expressing misogynist sentiments.<sup>157</sup> Graham does have an important role to play but as one of an ensemble cast and the action is only rarely depicted from her point of view. *The Defector* is as much a love story as a spy novel, as Divina falls for and has an affair with the defector, Sasanov.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Walton remarks that it was impossible to find any of MacInnes’s novels at the time of writing. They were out of print in the UK, while the works of Fleming, le Carré, and others, were still available. Nowadays, the eBook revolution has meant that some of her works are once again accessible. Some few have even been reissued, though a trawl of Amazon reveals that perhaps her most famous novel, *The Salzburg Connection*, is priced at £156 for the hardback edition.

<sup>156</sup> Other female spy fiction writers in the Cold War period did feature female operatives of various kinds in their works. Dorothy Gilman’s Mrs Pollifax series was mentioned above. The first novel, *The Unexpected Mrs Pollifax* (1966), is reminiscent of a ripping yarn. Mrs Pollifax wanders into the CIA headquarters to volunteer her services and following a case of mistaken identity, is sent as a courier to Mexico where she is kidnapped and transported to Albania, under Chinese control. Eventually she escapes and undertakes a perilous return journey to the USA. As she exclaims herself, “the idea’s preposterous” (Gilman, 1992: 65). In Diana Winsor’s *The Death Convention* (1974), Octavia (“Tavy”) Martin works for the Ministry of Defence and as a “minor agent” is sent to report on an environmental convention to be addressed by a potential defector, Russian scientist Alexei Bransk. Winsor does not directly address feminist issues, though just like Anthony, male characters are sometimes given misogynist things to say. Tavy is often referred to as a “bird” by her superior in *The Death Convention* (9, 17). Later, her colleague Pieter expresses his exasperation: ‘Women! No wonder women’s lib cannot succeed. One little secret kept from them and it fills their whole brain’ (63). Tavy’s appearance and sex appeal are much discussed, but nonetheless *The Death Convention* is primarily recounted from her point of view and she proves plucky and resilient, for example, after being attacked and thrown in a canal.

<sup>157</sup> For example, KGB Colonel, Antonyii Volkov “had no liking for women outside sex, and if he met one who was clever and ambitious, he resented it” (1982: 273).

<sup>158</sup> It is tempting to argue that just as Dorothy L. Sayers “inaugurated a new direction in the field” by blending “the two genres of crime and romance together” (Munt, 1994: 10), so has Anthony with spy fiction and romance. However, that direction has not been followed by many other writers, although Karen M. Cox has recently channelled the Cold War espionage context to produce an updated version of one of Jane Austen’s most famous works, in *Undeceived: Pride and Prejudice in the Spy Game* (2019).

What explains this divergence between detective fiction and spy fiction with respect to the prominence of women writers<sup>159</sup> and female protagonists? Crucially, as Reddy points out, popular fiction “tends to reflect prevailing social conditions and to present at least a surface verisimilitude” (1998: 1049). Hence, even during the “Golden Age” of detective fiction between the wars, women writers’ sleuths were generally men,<sup>160</sup> with the exception of Gladys Mitchell’s Mrs Adela Lestrangle Bradley, Patricia Wentworth’s Miss Silver, and above all Agatha Christie’s Miss Jane Marple. All three operated as amateur detectives, as women did not at that time fulfil roles as police officers or private investigators, which remained the case for some years after World War II. The lack of professional career opportunities for women was even more true in the secret services during the Cold War. Not that there were no women working for agencies such as the CIA or the SIS, but apart from the traditional roles mentioned above, they tended overwhelmingly to operate as analysts or cryptologists, rather than case handlers or field agents.

It was against this background that I decided to foreground the role of Mel O’Rourke. That she is an FBI “agent” is serendipitous – CIA operatives prefer to be known as “officers” – as it calls to mind the idea of “agency” which as Brenda Silver puts it, is an attribute of “an autonomous individual who thinks and acts on her own” (1987: 15). O’Rourke plays a crucial role in the novel, both in the hunt for the CIA mole which is at the heart of the narrative, and in the denouement, where it is her bravery and strength of purpose that win the day. In another example of intertextuality, her character is modelled on McCone, Warshawski and Milhone who epitomise, as

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<sup>159</sup> There have been a number of women writing spy novels since the fall of the Wall, generally set contemporaneously. Not that they have necessarily had it easy; Gayle Lynds, whose 1996 novel *Masquerade*, which introduced secret agent Liz Sansborough and went on to become a bestseller, reports that men – book reviewers, publishers – did everything in their power to put obstacles in her way: “To say I was being marginalised is an understatement” (2007: 18). In her wake, the most notable writer is former MI5 director Stella Rimington with her series featuring MI5 agent Liz Carlyle who debuted in *At Risk* (2004). Other examples include Linda L. Richards’ CIA story, *The Indigo Factor* (2012) and Anna Pitoniak’s CIA officer, Amanda Cole, who first appears in *The Helsinki Affair* (2024). Kate Atkinson’s *Transcription* (2018) which has ex-MI5 BBC producer Juliet Armstrong as its protagonist is set during the Cold War, as is Rosalie Knecht’s Vera Kelly (2018), although in the latter case the action takes the eponymous CIA agent to Argentina. In the two more recent additions to the series, Vera has become a private investigator.

<sup>160</sup> Dorothy Sayers’ Harriet Vane, however, is more than just a love interest for Lord Peter Wimsey, having important roles in both *Gaudy Night* (1935) and *Busman’s Honeymoon* (1937), and Agatha Troy, wife of Ngaio Marsh’s Roderick Alleyn, also plays an active part in the investigations in some of her later books.

Glenwood Irons puts it, “outgoing, aggressive, and self-assured sleuths who have transcended generic codes and virtually rewritten the archetypal male detective from a female perspective”. For, these detectives are not only more than capable of defending themselves and operating as fully-fledged “agents” in their own right, but “they speak from a woman’s perspective and address the problems which women face in modern society” (1995: xii). Yet, in formulating O’Rourke’s character, I was conscious of Sabine Vanecker’s argument that there is a certain ambivalence in the work of the women detective fiction writers of the 1980s (1997: 63). On the one hand, they seek to retain some of the characteristic features of the male detective hero – what Kathleen Gregory Klein describes as the “masculine virtues” required to do the job, such as “physical strength, logical thinking and worldly experience” (1995: 3).<sup>161</sup> On the other hand, such virtues, as Paulina Palmer notes, are often regarded as contradictory to the values and talents traditionally attributed to women (1997: 88). Klein goes on to decry the fact that such an attribution often consists of “the more stereotypical feminine talents of gossip and intuition”.<sup>162</sup> Vanecker offers as potentially more acceptable examples “tact, diplomacy [and] politeness” (1997: 65).

The challenge, therefore, was not to depict O’Rourke simply as a “tough guy” equivalent of her male counterparts, but without resorting to the stereotypical feminine characteristics derided by Klein. O’ Rourke was intended to represent, to borrow from Vanecker’s characterisation of Warshawski and Millhone, a “determined, assertive and powerful” woman “whose actions are both incisive and significant” (1997: 65). But to avoid the “tough guy” trap, a more rounded characterisation was required. Just as Warshawski and Millhone are allowed to show self-doubt, fear and an acknowledgement of danger, O’Rourke rejects the macho posturing she confronts every day. In the episode in Quito in Chapter Sixteen, she displays a certain vulnerability and self-doubt, but when it is needed, also presence of mind, fortitude and clarity of purpose. In short, she’s presented as a nuanced character and her struggle to overcome the misogyny she faces as a female agent is an important theme in the book.

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<sup>161</sup> See also Reddy, (1988: 5).

<sup>162</sup> For example, in Littell’s *The Sisters* a male CIA operative is said to possess “almost feminine intuition” (1987: 1).

In addition, I chose a woman, Catherine Gordon, to be the head of the taskforce RACETRACK and she is portrayed as a highly intelligent, supremely competent CIA officer, “a force of nature” as she is described by her colleagues. I decided to make the character female partly as a minor act of homage to Jeanne Vertefeuille, the veteran CIA officer who played a major role in the unmasking of Aldrich Ames,<sup>163</sup> but mainly to introduce another strong-minded woman in a leading role with agency in her own right. Gordon is not at all fazed by having to head up a team that includes three experienced and capable men. In Chapter Eleven, in conversation with Green, we learn something of her backstory and her struggle to be accepted as a fully-fledged CIA operative. Later, when she recounts the story of the exfiltration of Anatoliy Golitsyn, her initiative, perseverance and sang-froid are brought to the fore. Gordon and O’Rourke represent successive generations of female intelligence operatives who have had to overcome the obstacles in their path generated by the ingrained biases of a patriarchal system.

Bennet and Woollacott identify three “primary ideological and cultural concerns enduringly important in Britain since the late 1950s” that are reflected in spy fiction. One of these concerns they characterise as “representations of the relations between the sexes, particularly with regard to the construction of images of masculinity and femininity” (1987: 18). *Cossack* challenges the dominant paradigm of those images in Cold War spy fiction. O’Rourke and Gordon personify the qualities that Reddy identifies as defining a feminist perspective, that is to say, one that “sees women as capable of intelligence, moral reasoning, and independent action” (1988: 9).

#### **4.2 The Analytical Commentary I**

The Analytical Commentary I firstly provides a context for the creative work, setting it within the spy fiction tradition. Secondly, by means of a review of the literature in the field, it analyses the scope and nature of spy fiction, and explores the notion of the “realistic” Cold War spy novel. Thirdly, following the close reading of Cold War spy novels, including those by lesser-known writers, it sets out the tropes and devices employed to persuade the reader that the fictional world of espionage presented is a “realistic” portrayal. Thus, it makes significant original contributions to knowledge and practice in its

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<sup>163</sup> See Grimes and Vertefeuille (2012).



own right: it pays greater attention to lesser known writers than is usually the case; it provides a uniquely systematic analysis of the scope and nature of spy fiction, leading to a tentative redefinition of the genre; it represents an intervention, challenging the received wisdom that spy fiction may be characterised by a binary division into “realistic” and “heroic adventure” strands; and it sets out a fresh theoretical framework for the understanding of what constitutes “realistic” spy fiction. Thus, the groundwork is laid for future research and criticism.

### **4.3 The Interrelationship Between the Analytical Commentary and *Cossack***

Other important contributions to the “small advances” are not so readily discernible “on the surface”. For, they are embedded in the interrelationship between the Analytical Commentary and *Cossack*. In my view, notwithstanding my remarks in the previous two subsections, it is here that my thesis achieves its greatest degree of originality and innovation. It was signposted in the Introduction that this project is an example of research-led practice; hence although these two elements are distinct, they are interdependent. That is to say, as Smith and Dean suggest, there is “a reciprocal relationship” between them, by which “academic research can impact positively on creative practice” (2009: 1). The investigation of the nature of “realistic” spy fiction identifies the tropes and devices that underpin that practice. *The Cossack Variation* has been written consciously to incorporate those tropes and devices. Examples have been given in the subsection entitled “Employment of the ‘Jackal’ Approach” in Section 2 above. To take just one further example, in Chapter One, when Green leaves the US Embassy to check whether his asset, Oleg, codename BOTVINNIK, has left him a message in a dead-drop site in Kalvopuisto Park, he takes elementary countersurveillance measures: “Moscow Rules”. There is indeed a package for him containing a message, a message written in code which can only be deciphered by referring to a specific Penguin edition of *The Catcher in the Rye*. I could have simply shown the readers the deciphered message only, but I chose to write out the coded version in full. The point here is, at an early stage, to impress on the reader the “realistic” nature of the text, by providing the kind of detailed tradecraft that smacks of verisimilitude, while at the same time allowing her to believe that she is being given a privileged insight into the secret world of espionage. These devices are the result of my research.

That one example illustrates a key role of the Analytical Commentary II. The first section, “Narrative Point of View”, which outlines the decision-making processes that I went through in determining the narrative point of view, describes the creative gains and losses of different approaches and the consequent impact on the development of the novel. As Nelson observes, “Critical reflection on process is an integral part of the research inquiry” (2013: 29). Nelson goes on to introduce a form of knowledge – “know-what” – to cover “what can be gleaned through an informed reflexivity about the process of making” (44).<sup>164</sup>

Section 2, “Writing a ‘Realistic’ Cold War Spy Novel” and Section 3, “‘A Recipe for Success’: Suspense in the ‘Realistic’ Spy Novel”, fulfil a crucial function in demonstrating how the Creative Writing Portfolio makes an original contribution to knowledge and practice. For, both sections encompass the kind of exegesis that Bolt insists “not only explains or conceptualises practice” but “plays a crucial role in revealing the work of art” (2019: 31). *The Cossack Variation: A “Realistic” Cold War Spy Novel* thus takes the form, as Perry puts it, of a “creative-work-plus-exegesis model” of a doctoral thesis (2019: 35). Barrett (2019a: 3), Bolt (2019: 31) and Nelson (2013: 7) all describe the nexus of these two components as a “dialogical relationship”.

I have previously made reference to the autobiographical aspects of the novel. In particular, Chapter Three finds Michael Green ruminating on his upbringing and recalling incidents from his past, aspects of his life not wholly dissimilar from my own. I learned from writing the novel, to draw on Perry again, to recognise the “autobiographical traces” in my creative writing and appreciate “the instability of boundaries between the fictive and the autobiographical” (20019: 35, 37). More importantly, however, given that this project is about writing a novel informed by research, Section 2 describes in detail how the tropes and devices of “realistic” spy fiction are consciously applied in my own writing. The example of the coded message described above is just one illustration of the systematic approach I took.

The conscious application of the tropes and devices of “realistic” spy fiction is also calculated to persuade the reader of *Cossack’s* verisimilitude. Section 3 of the

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<sup>164</sup> Nelson has elaborated on this concept in the second edition of his book. Know-what, he argues, “resides in knowing what ‘works’, in teasing out the tactics by which ‘what works’ is achieved and the compositional principles involved” (2022: 52).

Analytical Commentary I discusses reader-response theorists who, as Lilian R. Furst puts it, “envisage readers as active participants in the creation of a text” (1992: 205). In this case, the point is that identifying the “objective” features of “realistic” spy fiction only takes us so far; what matters in the end is to what degree the *reader* buys into the enterprise and enters into the fictional world created by the author. There is a parallel here with Graeme Sullivan’s work on practice-led research in the visual arts. Sullivan argues that the creative process inherently contributes to new forms of knowledge and, in particular, asks “whether knowledge is found in the art object or whether it is made in the mind of the viewer” (2009: 47). In relation to creative writing, it bears repeating Iser’s argument that the relationship between author, text, and reader may be conceived “as an ongoing process that produces something that had not existed before” (1992: 206).

In terms of the dialogical relationship between creative practice and research, I found there was very little scholarly work on the role of women in spy fiction and I have drawn instead on analyses of their portrayal in crime fiction more generally. In the light of that research, I revised some passages in *The Cossack Variation*. In particular, I tried to make O’Rourke as much as possible more than a tough-guy equivalent. For example, I reviewed her conversation with CIA officer Marion Donnelly at the end of Chapter Fifteen and added some dialogue that expresses what Vanacker calls “the importance of a binding feminist solidarity” (1997: 73). Equally, at one point I had decided to delete the passage in which Gordon explains her backstory to Green, for reasons of concision. However, as a result of the research I did on the role of women in spy fiction, I realised that the passage fulfilled an important function in challenging the accepted conventions and I reinstated it. The idea here was to try to include material aimed at undertaking that challenge in an understated way, not through lengthy expositions or declamations. This process was not a one-way street, simply revising the novel in the light of my research; as the narrative emerged, it kindled ideas – in this case, the foregrounding of the role of women as active agents – which sent me back to the research.

A prominent example of the dialogical relationship occurs in Section 3 of the Analytical Commentary II. That section addresses key questions, RQ7 and RQ8, raised by my endeavour to construct a “successful” novel closely based on the tropes and devices of

“realistic” spy fiction identified in the Analytical Commentary I. At issue were the concerns evinced by Goodall and Goodman which led me to examine the concept of “formula literature” and to the work of Cawelti in particular. In addition, I had concluded that the degree to which *Cossack* generated sufficient suspense would be an important criterion for judging its success as a novel. That in turn led me to undertake additional research, in two directions. Firstly, I reviewed the academic literature on the nature of the concept of “suspense”, including the idea of the “paradox of suspense”. Secondly, I went back to le Carré, Freemantle and others to identify the mechanisms they employed to inject suspense into their narratives. Following these investigations, I was able to review *Cossack* taking account of the results, and thus gain insights into how my own writing managed to combine the tropes and devices of a “realistic” approach together with the mechanisms for generating suspense. In addition, that review enabled me to respond to feedback from the supervisory team to enhance the suspenseful aspects of the narrative.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In recent times, the idea of a new Cold War has been brought sharply into focus. Russia has invaded Ukraine, while the People's Republic of China has risen to superpower status, with its attendant challenge to democracy in Hong Kong and existential threat to Taiwan. This in itself suggests an enduring relevance of the literature of the Cold War and of spy fiction in particular. At any rate, there is clearly still an appetite for storytelling from that period, as evidenced by recent contributions to the canon by such writers as Bill Rapp, Tim Glister, Paul Vidich, Helen Dunmore, Jim Naughtie, Nick Elliot, and Andrew Turpin. New editions of the works of Fleming, le Carré and Deighton have been published in the last few years, including a reissue of the last-named's books by Penguin Classics. In addition, the film industry, streaming services and television companies have shown a willingness to revisit the era, with new versions of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and *The Ipcress File*, and productions of *A Bridge of Spies* and *A Spy Among Friends*. The spy fiction of the Cold War era provides a rich body of work, offering the scholar numerous avenues for research, including, inter alia, an aesthetic evaluation of its literary value, its contribution to popular culture, its exploration of global political themes, and its reflection of gender and class issues.

I chose to focus on a question that has exercised writers and critics of spy fiction over many years, namely the extent to which the genre can legitimately make a claim to be regarded as "realistic". My intention was to embark on a more systematic analysis of what that claim involved, closely investigating the scope and nature of spy fiction generally, and Cold War spy fiction in particular, while challenging the commonly held view that the genre has been susceptible to a simple bifurcation into "heroic adventure" and "realistic" strands. My research proved a surprise to me in revealing how many Cold War spy novels have been written, in a wide range of styles, confirming my initial impression that this binary division did not do justice to such a diverse and nuanced genre. My work tentatively suggests a way forward towards defining more closely the contours of the spy fiction genre and offers, through the systematic analysis of the nature of "realistic" spy novels, fruitful avenues for future research.

The previous section has demonstrated how both the Analytical Commentary and the Creative Writing Portfolio make significant original contributions to knowledge and

practice. In particular, I submit that the latter, the novel *The Cossack Variation*, represents more than a “small advance” with its fresh approach to the mole-hunt narrative and indeed deserves to be seen as innovative and pioneering in its deliberate move to break with convention and foreground the role of women operatives in frontline positions. Indeed, it seems to me that in so doing I have indicated a particularly profitable line of research, namely how women are portrayed in Cold War spy fiction and indeed, in the genre more widely. Craig and Cadogan include just one chapter on this issue, “Guns in their Garters” in *The Lady Vanishes*, which was published in 1981. Since then, there is very little of note, although Priscilla Walton does briefly discuss gender issues in spy fiction more generally in her article on Helen MacInnes, published in 1998.<sup>165</sup> Given, as we have seen, that Bennett and Woollaston maintained as long ago as 1987 that gender constructions and sexual relations are fundamental elements of the thriller formula (18), it is clear that this is an area that would benefit greatly from a fresh scholarly perspective.

Above all, it is important to bear in mind that my intention has always been to integrate the two core components – the Analytical Commentary and the Creative Writing Portfolio – into a coherent whole. It bears reiterating that this thesis represents an example of research-led practice, an approach which, while not new, is still in its relative infancy, particularly with regard to presenting a full-length novel as the work of creative practice. Thus, there was always an element of risk and experimentation in pursuing an original project of this kind. The two core components have been designed to exist in a “reciprocal relationship”: the “realistic” aspects of *The Cossack Variation* depend and draw fundamentally on the research findings laid out in the Analytical Commentary: that drawing sharp genre distinctions is difficult and probably unhelpful; that steps may be taken towards defining spy fiction but they must be inevitably tentative; that a strict bifurcation of the genre into “heroic adventure” and “realistic” strands does not stand up to interrogation; that the relationship of the reader to the text is fundamental to an understanding of the nature of “realistic” spy fiction; that the key watchword here is verisimilitude rather than mimesis; that there are identifiable tropes and devices that

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<sup>165</sup> Silver has contributed “Woman as Agent: The Case of le Carré’s *Little Drummer Girl*” (1987), but her article concerns a novel that though published during the Cold War, addresses the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Cold War spy fiction writers employ to persuade their readers of that verisimilitude. Part II of the Analytical Commentary is designed specifically to provide an exegesis that explains and contextualises the new insights to be gleaned from the creative work. -As an example of research-led practice, *'The Cossack Variation: A "Realistic" Cold War Spy Novel'* represents a project where the creative writing is, as Nelson puts it, "submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry" (2013: 9).

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