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Libbey

First Serial Right

A WATCH IN THE NIGHT

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CHAPTER 1

A huge angry cloud rolled northward, determined to catch up with the dirty gray air mass just making its way over the distant range of mountains. It was as if these celestial companions were set to meet, arriving fashionably late to a short but loud party in a rickety boathouse in the harbor. The party that had left two men dead, and a third nursing a serious leg wound.

Agent James Sullivan, Sully to just about everyone, had gunshots ringing in his ears. Wiping at the mess of Kurt Framm's blood splattered across his own two-day growth of beard, he stared in dull horror at the picture he'd pulled from Framm's coat pocket. He pinched it hard between his thumb and pointer finger.

Sweet Jesus, he thought. How could even an animal like Fritz Gunder do that to another human being? He felt sorrow welling up inside of him, but he smiled in spite of the pain. Framm died beggin' for mercy, Digger. That help a little? He knew it didn't, though. Nothing could make up for what was pictured in the Polaroid frame.

His tongue stirred the chew in his mouth. Then, gripping it between his teeth, he leaned over, letting a mix of saliva, tobacco juice, and his own blood drip down on what was left of Kurt Framm's face. With more force, he sent another wad sailing across the boathouse, and watched with satisfaction as it bounced off the head of Framm's strong man, a big ugly gorilla of a guy that he'd brought along for backup.

Some backup, Sully thought. Where the hell had the meathead been when Framm had come bustin' through those shutters, spraying his Uzi all around like some damn amateur? It had only taken Sully one shot to his heartless chest to bring down Fritz Gunder's number-two man. The second shot he placed just under his right nostril, cutting off his screams and pleas.

When the meathead had finally caught on, he followed Kurt through the shutters, but his foot hadn't touched the planks before Sully's third shot dissolved his face into a bloody mess. The impact sent him crashing headfirst into a crabbing net, and he fell on his back, weapon still cold, half caught in the net's stiff twine.

Suddenly, Sully's fingers numbed. The gruesome image, what was left of the Digger, became too heavy to hold. He watched it fall from his hand, stick for a moment to the bloody material of the wetsuit covering his leg, then land noiselessly against the stool under him. He was leaning his weight on the stool, applying pressure to the spurting artery in his leg. The pressure kept the blood loss to a slow trickle.

He fought to focus on something else, but his eyes kept returning to the photo; all that was left of one of THEATRE's finest agents. Then he saw it, in the lower corner of the photograph; a hand at the end of a blood-soaked sleeve. The Dig's middle finger was standing straight up. Sully smiled through cracked lips and thought, way to go Dig. Even in death, his final message had been 'Screw you Fritz Gunder... Screw you.'

He shifted his weight, and his right foot kicked something. It was Kurt's HK 9mm, the gun that piece of shit had always bragged about. It had fallen out of his jacket when Sully had taken him down. The agent shook his head and thought, well Heckler and Koch didn't do you any good this time, scumbag.

With a shrug he picked it up, unzipped the top of his wetsuit and let it slide down inside.

The Digger always used to say, ASully, you can never have too much fire power. He shifted again, and with the foot of his good leg, kicked Framm=s smashed Uzi across the boathouse floor, smiling grimly when it buried itself in the crotch of the backup. He tore two long strips from Framm=s coat, and tied them as tightly as he could around the hole in his thigh, wincing.

Sully let his head fall back, his eyes piercing the blackness overhead. He took a deep breath. Using the corner of the table to brace himself, he put weight down on his wounded leg, preparing to walk. The pain in his leg almost eclipsed the ache of unfinished revenge, and he opened his mouth and screamed up into the rafters, scaring the hell out of a family of rats that had taken temporary refuge in the rotting beams. Sully made a pledge to himself. Gunder, it will be you lying there next time.

He imagined himself putting a series of holes in the man=s body as the Digger looked on and smiled. He=d start with one to the gut, let him bleed and hurt awhile. Then maybe the balls, take away his dignity. He thought he=d finish with one to the throat, so he could watch him drown in his own rotten blood. He let the fantasy slip into a dark corner of his mind, and steadied himself again. It was time to take out the garbage.

He limped his way across the floor, bent down, and gripped Kurt Framm=s collar with both hands. He dragged him to the net, and laid him out next to the big gorilla. He wound his hands around one end of the netting, and towed the two bodies out to the end of the dock. Once there, he set them back to back against one of the pilings. He gave a wink to the absent Digger, thinking, I probably should deep six 'em, but I'd rather have their clean up team find 'em this way. Should really piss 'em off. Right, Dig?

Sully smiled, pulling the mask over his face and adjusting the air regulator, trying a few breaths. He imagined Gunder=s shock when he got the news that he=d been set up, and had lost his right hand man. It felt good to be the fish that got away.

He slipped off the edge of the dock into the icy water, thankful for its numbing effect on his leg. As he sank slowly into the black river, he was delighted to see that the rats from inside the boathouse were now scurrying out toward the two bodies, squeaking with excitement at the prospect of a hearty meal.

He surfaced 20 minutes later and crawled into his dingy. He flopped down, and lay there for a couple of minutes in the rocking boat before he changed into dry clothes. He spit a wad of saliva, laced with dried blood, into the stream. The leg wound had finally stopped throbbing. He thought, Kurt, you always were a lousy shot. Should'a spent more time on the range instead of in the bushes with your buddy Fritz.

He sunk the dingy, buried his wet suit in the soft clay that lined the bank, and headed in the direction of his pick-up point.

Twenty minutes in, the leg started again. He realized he'd have to find a place to rest or he wouldn't make it out. His luck held, as he practically fell into a duck-blind, probably belonging to some well-to-do hausser. In seconds he slipped into sleep, but nightmare images made it anything but restful.

First, he found himself atop some high cliffs. In the distance, he spotted Director Hendricks standing alongside his friend and former Control, Phil Cary. They seemed to be arguing, and more than once he heard his name mentioned. Then the scene faded and another replaced it. He was

standing in a desert alongside someone vaguely familiar. When the figure turned to face him, he saw the smiling, pockmarked face of Fritz Gunder, his teeth red with blood.

Sully woke to the sound of someone screaming, his body automatically tensing and his gun in his hand.

"Shit", he said disgusted, when he realized the screams had been his own.

He held his breath, biting down on his lip. He worried that his outburst could have alerted someone unfriendly to his whereabouts. After five minutes, nothing moved, and he felt safe to move out again.

This time he tucked Kurt's 9MM down inside his sock. He checked his own short barrel 357, wiped sticky fingers on his trousers, and set off to the rendezvous spot, hoping his contact would be there.

He limped through the woods using only the moon for light and direction. As he gripped the studded handle of the 357, he smiled, remembering one of Julie's famous remarks from so many years ago. It had been during their wedding breakfast, served in a forest of mango trees and catered by a brown-skinned waiter wearing a white coat and a knowing grin.

Julie had been standing on the balcony overlooking the grounds of the resort, shaking her head and chuckling. "Sully, I'll bet I'm the only bride who's ever had to share her wedding bed with a 357." He kept it under his pillow to this day.

His progress was slow, but he eventually reached the vicinity of his pick-up spot, a stretch of woods next to a fire road. His thigh was throbbing badly now, and the leg of his trousers was soaked through with fresh blood. He hobbled from tree to tree, finally resting against a trunk and sliding to the ground.

He mumbled to the dark and woods, "Betta' find me soon guys, or I've had it." His vision went gray, then black. This time there were no nightmares.

They obviously did find him, because the next thing he remembered was being lifted through the open door of a gunship. He felt a cool breeze bouncing against his face before he faded out again. Several days later (he never asked how long he'd been out, but considering his leg had been stitched up, he guessed at least that long) he was propped on pillows in a rickety wheelchair, inside a musty debriefing room, coffee in one hand, stale doughnut in the other, a young agent staring blankly in his direction. Without ceremony, the agent began asking questions about what had gone down with Gunder's men.

Agent Sullivan, can you please tell me about your encounter in the boathouse?

Sully looked at him square. "Screw you kid. I'm not getting on your little merry-go-round of questions. Capiche?"

The man looked like he was tired, like he expected resistance and didn't have the time. His next comment brought Sully up short. "Come on, Agent Sullivan. I'm sure after 20 years in the bureau, you know the drill."

Mother of God, had it really been 20 years?

Chapter 2

Summer 1973

Nam was winding down, and the fighting fizzling out. The protests back home had reached a fever pitch. The Hawks had finally realized they were in a no-win situation, and were ready to throw in the towel in Southeast Asia.

Congress and those members of the administration bright enough to see the need were already working on how to employ the returning young warriors, who were no longer needed to cover someone else's ass. As it turned out, not all of them would receive a parade when they landed back home.

James Sullivan had just finished his second tour when the war officially ended. He'd been about to receive that scrap of paper proclaiming something that amounted to, "Congratulations grunt, you get to go home with your butt still in one piece. Go and sin no more."

Sergeant Sullivan was average in size and build, but he was not the boy next door. He was too cynical, had too many creases in his brow to be mistaken for that. He had fair skin and red hair from an Irish grandmother. There was hardly an ounce of fat on his solid soldier's body. Two tours in the jungles of Vietnam had seen to that.

For the tenth time, he checked to be sure the tape that held his military 9MM just below his knee was secure. He knew if they found it, he could be in a shithouse full of trouble, but the way he figured it, it had been a part of him for the past 24 months, it had kept him alive. He was not about to part with it now.

He left his seat before the plane had come to a full stop, earning him a scowl from the stewardess. He pulled down on his shirt to smooth the wrinkles. As he continued up the aisle, he glanced down and checked the decorations on his chest, a group of medals that the brass, in their infinite wisdom, had decided he had a right to wear. There was the Good Conduct Ribbon, and a couple of I've been there citations. But there were also three that even he had to admit were pretty impressive; a Bronze Star, with Cluster, a Purple Heart, also with Cluster, and a small ribbon given to him by a North Vietnamese General, a man who was only alive because Sully had yanked him out of the path of a sniper's bullet.

Besides the ribbon, the man had shown his gratitude by inviting Sully to his home for dinner, where they consumed large quantities of homemade wine, and topped off the evening with the services of a couple of nubile local girls. It was an evening that Sully, after many long months of abstinence, truly enjoyed.

Four days after he'd arrived at Dix, he was still waiting. An army expression he'd often heard his father use, a carry over from WW II, seemed to fit: Hurry up and wait.

Finally, mid morning of the 5th, day he heard his name called. He broke his cigarette in half, depositing it in a coffee can that was already spilling over with butts, and strolled back inside slowly. Screw 'em, he thought. I've waited long enough for them, now they can damn well wait for me.

An obnoxiously efficient-looking T5 was shuffling some papers as Sully approached the desk. Yanking them out of the machine, his eyes intentionally avoiding the sergeants' citations and about to hand them over for his signature when he heard his name called again. The T5 smirked,

dropped them onto his desk and pointed to a doorway, with a look that made Sully's blood boil.

When he walked in he found himself facing a Major, probably in his early forties, whose ribbons told Sully he'd been 'there' also. He snapped to attention and by the numbers, threw the officer a salute, sounding off, "Sir, Sergeant Sullivan reporting as ordered.

But the Major's answer surprised him. "Relax Sullivan, I'm a civilian now myself.

With that, his eyes dropped to what was obviously Sully's service record, mumbling, "not exactly a company man, were you? Your last CO said you preferred working alone, but that's okay, it's just what we were going to be looking for."

The words froze Sully to his chair. He thought, "No way mister, what ever you have in mind is not going to include me."

The ex-Major seemed to read his mind pretty good, and he smiled and said, "I know, 'Nams all but over, so as far as the man in the street's concerned, it's going to be business as usual. The major slammed the service record closed, stood up and did a turn around the small room, before coming back and flopping back in his chair. Not so."

Sully waited, wondering what in the hell was going down. Finally, the man's attitude changed. He was even smiling when he said, "Ever heard of the CIA?"

Sully nodded, "Shit sir, you couldn't move in 'Nam without tripping over 'em".

The Major continued, "Right. But I have to admit, in spite of their hands being tied, they did some pretty good work. Makes you wonder what they could have accomplished if the government had left them alone. That's the problem. You can't do your best work with some politician's always pullin' your chain.

"Sergeant, just suppose there were an organization that allowed its agents to be free of all that extra baggage. In fact, one that was so far undercover that no elected official even knows of its existence."

Sully considered it. "Could have made a difference, I guess."

This must have been the right answer, because the Major slammed his hand on the desk top shouted "Right!" Then he sat back and smiled at Sully.

"Sergeant, all I'm at liberty to say now is that there may be such an organization. Southeast Asia may have simmered down for a while, but Europe's powder keg, ready to blow at any moment. And East Germany's the place to watch."

He didn't give Sully a chance to answer, but went right on, "so here's what you do, go back to college, get your degree and maybe, just maybe, sometime we'll be talking again. It sounded strange, but he was in no position to argue.

"By the way, couple of things. One, don't mention our little conversation to a soul. And two, let's not take that 9MM to class with you. Dismissed."

When Sully got outside the office, he stood for a moment, trying to make sense out of what had just gone down.

"How in the devil had that Major known about the 9MM?"

He marched over to the T5's desk, picked up his discharge papers. Sully walked out of the office into the midday sun, headed towards a bus to New York, and a degree in political science.

Digger Malone

Dudley Francis Malone was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, son of Francis Patrick Malone, Supervisor of Rebinna coal mine #7, one of the largest in Fayette County.

Francis Malone was a large, humorless man who, it was said, cared for only three things: his pretty little wife, whom he'd married right after they'd graduated from Uniontown High, his son Dudley, who wouldn't step a foot inside the mines if he had anything to say about it, and his job, which he took very seriously.

Friendly and helpful on the job, Frank Malone seldom associated with any of the mine workers after hours, and never joined them at the taverns that were in walking distance of the mines. Instead, he chose to spend his off hours with wife and son.

In fact, the standing joke (behind his back of course) that he was the only Irishman that any had ever heard of who didn't enjoy a nip or two after hours.

What they didn't know, and he wasn't about to tell them, was that when he'd been a young boy growing up in Scranton, Pennsylvania, his father, besides being foreman of mining crew, had been the town drunk. On a bender when Frank was only six, his father had fallen down a mine shaft and killed himself. He had never touched Frank once, either to hit him or to hug him.

The company, because of his years of faithful service, gave the widow a survivor's check in the amount of \$3,000 and the option of staying in their home until she could make other arrangements.

Fortunately her brother Marcus, who worked in Uniontown, offered to take her in. He was a widower himself, and he probably figured it would be good to have someone around to take care of him and the house. And young Frank could do chores.

This worked out, but only after she told him that she wasn't about to become his slave, and if he didn't like it, he could go to the devil. They were clear about what they were to each other from then on.

The years passed with only an occasional blowup between brother and sister. Frank went to school in the daytime and worked as an apprentice at Ribenna on weekends. After graduating from school, Frank moved into a full time position in the mines.

A couple of years later, he married his high school sweetheart. She had a baby, and they named him Dudley, after her grandfather. Then Frank did something very unusual. Instead of moving into one of the company owned houses, he made a deal with a local lumber yard. By working nights and weekends, and taking his pay in materials, he was eventually able to build his own home.

Young Dudley did well in school. He was a fair student, and an outstanding athlete, helping to take Uniontown High football team to the playoffs three years in a row.

It was at the graduation dance that Dudley became Digger. He had asked Beverly Lucas to go with him. Beverly had lost to Margie Manner for the title of Prom Queen, but he still thought she was the prettiest girl in school.

At first she was reluctant to go, but he insisted, walking home with her every day for a week, even though he lived on the opposite side of town. She eventually gave in, and they went, and had a good time. That is, until he suggested they go outside for a breath of fresh air.

They stepped out into the courtyard, the spring night cool and full of stars. They walked down the path, and just as Dudley was getting up to try to kiss her, another senior passed heading towards the dance, and looked at Beverly and said, "Hi, runner-up."

She screamed as Dudley reached across, picked the joker up and hung him head first over the wall, which separated the courtyard from the parking lot, twenty feet below..

Only Beverly's pleading kept the boy from being seriously hurt. When Dudley pulled him back up, he stuck his finger under the boys nose.

"Don't ever talk to her like that again. Dig me?"

The boy, still wide-eyed with fear, stammered, I dig ya. I-I-I dig. Dudley let go of him, and he ran towards the school, shouting I dig, I dig, I dig ya! By the next morning the Dudley had disappeared, in his place was Digger. The name stuck.

After graduation, he wandered around. He wasn't sure what he wanted to do, but he was sure mining wasn't it.

That fall he found himself in downtown Pittsburgh. With a what the hell he wandered into the Army Recruiting office, spoke with a Staff Sergeant for a couple of minutes, got up to leave, then glanced up at a poster, with a picture of Uncle Sam saying, "I want you." With a quick, "Why not," he filled out the forms, and a week later found himself at Indian Town Gap.

Being the only coal miner's son in the squad, he took a lot of ribbing until, finally fed up, he took out two of the biggest members of the squad. After that, he was left alone.

Though he didn't know it, the squad leader was also the son of a coal miner. And when the man saw how young Digger took care of his problem, he decided maybe this recruit was worth watching.

Digger came out of basic training number one in the entire division, and at a ceremony the following day, he was promoted to Corporal and attached to headquarters as a basic training instructor.

When Korea hit, he was sent to the NCO school at Fort Benning, and from there to the trenches and sandbag bunkers in Pusan.

He often used to tell Sully that if he had any regrets about his time in the service, it was that he had not been able to transfer to one of the branches like the Rangers or Paratroopers.

However, in spite of these misgivings, he was able to acquire quite a reputation among his superiors as someone that could be counted on to perform no matter the conditions.

Somehow, the exploits of this young soldier, now a Staff Sergeant, reached those running Theater. So by the time Sully joined, Digger's reputation as one of their most valuable agents was the stuff legends were made of.

Chapter 3

Unfortunately things didn't work out the way Sully'd hoped. After graduation I bummed around in the private sector for a few months, soon realizing that the world of big business wasn't for me and subbing at a local high school didn't come off much better.

He mopped around for a couple of mere weeks, trying to figure just what in the devil he should do. Then one morning, he got up, looked out the window and with a "hell with it", pulled out the card the Major had given him back at Dix and called the number on the back.

A sweet young thing answered with a business like, "Colman, Snyder and Radcliff, may I help you? My brisk, "yes, let me speak to Mr Phil Care" must have ticked her off, 'cause all I got in return was a curt, "sorry, we have no one here by that name."

I backed off a little, "Okay, let your Mr. Carey who doesn't work there, know that a Sergeant Sullivan called him.

A week later I found himself on a jet heading for the Twin Cities, where an unmarked van met my plane and for the next 3 months I was put through a drill that made Nam seem a walk in the park.

But screw it. That was all yesterday, water under the bridge etc. He was 20 minutes out of Dulles, his latest assignment completed. Sully shook his head, "what an understatement that was. After battling my way across half a continent, almost getting creamed more than once, losing my best friend and all I can say is 'assignment completed'?

As the plane hit the runway, I stood up, grabbed my Valpack from the overhead slot and worked my way toward the front. When he glanced outside a disturbing thought surfaced, "sometime I'm gonna' sit down and try to figure out just how many persons I've been forced to kill since I raised my right hand and swore allegiance to the good old US of A.

Then my mind took off on another track, recalling something Dad had once told me. It had been toward the end of WWI and the old man had been assigned to 'Graves Registration Detail' to try and identify as many American as they could find among the dead. When he'd come across the upper half of a German (what in the hell had they called them back then? Huns, that was it in the man's fist was the smashed remains of a cigarette lighter. He could see the lettering, "Gott mit Uns," translated it came out to "God be with us". I can still hear his words when he wondered aloud, "now how in the devil can God be with us both?"

Looking back Sully realized there had been very few that he even gave a second thought to having killed, but there had been that one time. At first he couldn't even remember the East German's name, then it came to him...Rasaloit, Herman Rasaloit. He had been little more than a courier carrying instructions to one of Felix Gunder's predecessors the day Sully'd intercepted him. But instead of backing down, the damn fool had tried to play it tough. It had cost him his life!

As his foot hit the cement, his mind rolled back to Heathrow. It hadn't been a pleasant trip, even though five minutes after they were air born he'd fallen sound asleep. A trick he'd learned from an older Agent. "Sleep whenever you can Sully ' cause you never know when some situation will keep you moving for 3 or 4 days. There had been just to much Digger on his mind, plus that damn snapshot kept passing in front of his eyes like some friggin' slide presentation. His gut tightened every time it came by and he was forced once again to look at the remains of his good friend.

Staying awake hadn't helped either, the scenes were still as strong as ever, then finally the entire incident seemed to erupt, as his body shot forward, his knees banging up against the seat in front of him.

And even worse, it caused the poor bastard sitting next to Sully to bounce off the seat and down into a mass of papers, pens, research materials, even the man's favorite calculator wasn't spared. It hit the cabin floor and disappeared under the seat across the aisle.

As he leaned up on one knee trying to reclaim his own work, he heard this clown say something about a Digger and how it was me you wanted Gunder, not him. The rest lost in the rattling of his own papers.

Sully oblivious of the damage he just caused, was surprised when he looked over a couple of minutes later and found the seat next to him vacant.

When the agent caught the man's eye and nodded a "sorry" only to receive a scowl in return, he shrugged, turned and focused his gaze on the landscape outside mumbling "screw you friend, I've got more important things to consider."

Now even the Digger would have to return to the shadows as I prepared myself for the meeting I knew was coming up with assistant Director Pace Hendricks.

Biting down on his lip he frowned, "that sure wasn't gonna' be any piece of cake!"

He'll no doubt want an explanation as to why I'd killed that supposed double agent. "Bullshit, Kurt Framm had no more been than I was". Never at a loss for words, I smiled; at the same time mumbling, "you had to have been there Henny old boy."

It was exactly 3 hours later that I found himself sitting across from the Assistant Director, the man obviously anxious to get started. Another one liner surfaced, "don't want to be late for my hanging, huh""

As Hendricks, sitting ramrod straight in a chair too large for his thin frame, nodded to his secretary, then to Phil Carey, my former Control and incidentally good friend, I thought of a name that seemed to fit "The Gruesome Twosome."

And the ceremony upstairs had been the same old bullshit. Hendricks reading my citation, with little enthusiasm, briefly touching on the successful completion of my assignment. After all, I had put a real dent in Fritz Gunder's organization hadn't I?

Then turning and indicating that Carey and I were to follow, stalked out of the room.

As the three of us rode down in the elevator, I realized my thoughts were still up there in that awards chamber where so many of my fellow agents had received theirs posthumously. It wasn't hard to pull up a couple of names from a very long list. Agents like Tom Thunder, the pure Cherokee, that had taken a burst from an UZI only days before he was to go on an extended R and R or Charlie Vager, our munitions expert, who'd been blown to hell trying to defuse a new type of explosive the East Germans had just come up with.

Ironically, those types of citations had to be kept under wraps even from their families. Face it, they had been active members of an organization that didn't exist!

Theatre had been General Eisenhower's brainchild from the start. Like a pregnant woman he'd given it life, nursed it through infancy, been there to guide it until it reached maturity.

Being the expert on European affairs it had been his opinion from the start that our real problems lay with the Russians and we'd damn well better acknowledge it. And further, that we had

to come up with a more sophisticated espionage organization that theirs or we could easily lose our advantage in that part of the world.

Like Carey had only touched on back at Dix to that young sergeant, it had to be one that was without any ties to either the Washington bureaucracy or politicians trying to feather their own nest.

There was no denying that some of the present and agencies were good and considering what they were up against, it was amazing to the General that they accomplished as much as they did.

However, Theatre, not unlike the little known Phalanx,* would be financed through the private sector by men who'd always kept themselves and their wealth out of public scrutiny. Their only reward was knowing that they were helping protect the American way.

Down thought the years there'd been the usual rumors, that just sort of an organization did exist, but when Congress tried to look deeper, that's all they could come up with....rumors.

Of course the other three organizations were not blind, they knew we were out there, but ironically for theatre; whereas they could seldom agree among themselves when it came to us, there had developed a "go for it" attitude that still prevails today.

The General had stayed active with theatre, even after he'd become president and until his second heart attack. Then realizing it needed a stronger hand at the helm, enlisted the help of an old West Point buddy, General Norman Zimmerman. He held that post until he retired and it was passed on to a younger man. Colonel Jeffery Myers his aide.

Through all this the chain of command was never compromised It's as strong to day as when General Eisenhower first brought into existence.

We hadn't been in the room more than a couple of minutes before he realized just how smooth the assistant director was. Having probably spent time at one of these seminars that teach executives how to handle just this kind of situation. But I also knew I wasn't going to let him get the better of me!

Face it, I'd had the advantage of years of field experience whereas, except for knowing the workings of theater from the inside, he was at a disadvantage.

But his opener still hit hard, "Sully, that citation upstairs notwithstanding, I personally feel you handled your last assignment like some Goddamn recruit. Not only did you use poor judgment but in my opinion you definitely overreacted. He stopped to take a breath, "when what you should have done was only subdue...."

* A secret organization run by the Jesuits, (Society of Jesus)

That was as far as he got! I was out of my chair and half way across his desk, had it not been for Cary's big arm across my chest and his, "easy old man, easy. And to the Director, "for Christ's sake Pace, this isn't getting us anywhere.

Still fuming, I sat back in my chair. Then glaring at the man I yelled, "Henrick's take a look at this and tell me again, how I should have only subdued Kurt Framm." With that I threw the photograph of Digger's remains down on his desk.

No one spoke, all eyes were fixed on the picture of the dead Agent. Hendrick's merely stared down at it, tapping his index finger on its corner. Cary zeroed in on it and mumbled, "Oh shit" then looked out into space, as if searching for something else to say.

The deathly silence that enclosed the room was broken by a gagging sound as the director's secretary, Edna Wilmot, let it come into her line of vision. She cried out in horror, turned and tore out of the room.

I reclaimed the photograph, ignored the Director, nodded to Carey and walked out of the room.

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It had probably been the only time in his life that Digger had misjudged a situation, but in all fairness to him, our intelligence had placed Fritz Gunder and Kur out of the area.

Supposedly more than 300 miles away in the Balkans attending some bullshit meeting to introduce the new KGB control to his people. When, in fact, he was only waiting across a small river that sliced the two villages apart.

The Digger had received a message at a drop box telling him of a contact that had information involving a refugee with names of new Agents recently brought into East Germany from behind the Iron Curtain.

The Digger and I had usually been successful in taking out these young German Agents, as Digger liked to say "even before they were even potty trained."

The problem was, this time I was involved in a meeting with our Control and Digger had felt he had to move on it; backup or not! A decision that he would soon come to regret. The whole thing was staged just to take out one half of the team of Digger Malone and Jim Sullivan that had been plaguing the East Germans for years.

Digger would have probably been more cautious if the meeting was to have taken place in some back alley or a bombed out warehouse, but to make contact in a school house on our side of the wall seemed harmless enough.

Maybe he was just plain burned out, I never will know. We had just returned from East Germany, where we'd spent an entire month locating three agents that had been playing both sides of the street.

What ever it was, he took only casual note of the Metzeln's[†] van as he crossed the road toward the school yard stopping for a second to admire the new playground equipment sitting there in the noontday sun.

Digger'd never had any kids of his own, but the relationship he'd had with my son Jamie showed what a great father he might have been.

The it happened! Just as he'd caught sight of the van making a U turn, something hit his

[†] *Butcher's van

right arm, his body went limp and he felt himself being dumped inside this same van, landing among a dozen slabs of beef. Then everything went black!

The driver, Kurt Framm had no problem with the East German border guards at the checkpoint, bored and tired with the routine, they gave him only a cursory inspection, followed by an indifferent wave on.

Sometime later, Digger felt the weird sensation as if he were being dragged down into some deep, dark whirlpool, then, just as abruptly being thrown up into a wave of pain that seemed to scream its way throughout his entire body.

The agent came to only to find himself stripped naked, tied to a wooden bench and looking like some damn generator with wires protruding from every where on his big frame.

The ones that hurt the most were the ones attached to his testicle and eyelids. Because every time the wattage was turned up and his body would try to escape the pain by pulling itself up off the table, it tore at the clamps.

Digger was now beyond the point of uttering a sound, even if the spikes that had been driven through his tongue and into his jawbone had allowed it.

It was hard to believe that what now lay exposed amid a bed of raw blood, fragments of torn skin and hair had ever been one of Theatre's fines agents. There was no part of him that had been spared the horrors of this torture, by the three now standing over his body.

However, there had been little satisfaction for their leader, Fritz Gunder, when, even through the most terrible part of the ordeal the Digger had refused to utter so much as a sound.

The torchers standing along side him refused to make eye contact with their leader, for fear they might show some sign of what they were thinking, At that this poor bastard on the table had made the famous Fritz Gunder look like an ineffectual ass.

Out of frustration Gunder grabbed a wooden slat, that earlier had been used to break Digger's legs and preceded to smash it down again and again on the lifeless body.

It wasn't until Kurt Framm had finally been able to drag him away from the table and he'd fallen against a nearby wall that he was forced to admit "the bastard's beaten me again."

Pushing Kurt Framm aside and ignoring the second ones questioning look, he swung around, cursed, raced out of the room and threw himself into the front seat of the van.

It wasn't until he saw Diggers bloody carcass being thrown into the back like so much dead meat that he finally returned to normal.

But the Polaroid Kurt had taken just before bringing out the agents body did little to relieve the anger. However, a new thought did, "now if I can only do the same to you someday Sullivan, It will even the score."