

"Are you planning to feed me or to seduce me?"
"Both. A hungry woman has no interest in sex."
"You are quite a philosopher."

"No, chicken; I'm a man of action. Some guy said, 'To think is to act; that's me.'"

"Do you act without thinking?"

"Have another martini. I like you better when you don't ask questions."

It was nearly midnight when they emerged from the restaurant. A light rain had fallen and a mist rose around them. She took his arm as she walked a little unsteadily over the wet cobblestones to their waiting automobile. Wilson tipped the *parquero* who held the car doors open for them. "Now, back to Madrid," he said as he settled himself in the driver's seat.

"Wilson, there's something I want to do before we go back." Jane Forbes turned toward him in the seat with sparkling eyes. "The best fortune-teller in Spain lives in Segovia. Let's visit her."

"Tonight? It's midnight!"

"That's not too late in Spain. Besides, she only works in the early morning hours. She says that is when revelations come without outside interference."

He sat with his hands on the wheel, looking at her. "You believe this?"

"Oh, I don't know. But what if it is a fake? It's fun."

He shook his head in resignation. "O.K., O.K. I just hope that when I suggest the fun and games you'll say 'yes,' too."

She laughed, tossing her hair, and laid a hand lightly on his knee.

They drove across the bridge to the square before the cathedral and parked under the plane trees. Wilson turned off the car's engine and, after a moment, the lights. At first the square seemed entirely deserted,

but in the quiet following the dying of the engine they heard low laughter and a scuffling of feet. A couple was standing close together making love in the shadows thrown by a little ornate bandstand.

They got out of the car and Jane Forbes led the way toward the cathedral, which rose in a great mass, disappearing at its upper levels in the mist and rain. "Who is this fortune-teller?" Wilson asked in an involuntary whisper. "The archbishop's sister?"

"Don't be sacrilegious. We go down that little street at the side of the cathedral. It's too narrow for automobiles." She took his arm as they walked down a narrow, curving pedestrian way between shuttered rows of medieval houses with small stores and shops on the ground floor. A sudden gust of wind mixed with a light rain set an iron sign, suspended overhead from a rod, to swinging wildly. Wilson put his arm around her shoulders as they walked.

"How much farther?"

"Not far. We are almost there."

They moved around a curve in the narrow street, leaning into the wet wind. A slight man was standing on a stoop before a dingy, unlighted house, his face illuminated in the dark by a match held to a cigarette. He looked up, startled, at the sound of their footsteps, and flinging match and cigarette to the pavement, ran off down the narrow passage like a small bird in flight.

Wilson recognized Slade.

"It looks as if we scared away a customer," Jane Forbes said lightly.

"Is this it?" Wilson asked, gazing down the hill where the echoes of Slade's flying footsteps were dying away.

"Just ring the bell."

They waited in the dark and wet for some min-

utes, and Wilson had already rung the bell twice more in exasperation, when a small square behind an iron grillwork opened in the door.

"Sì?"

"I am Miss Forbes from Madrid. Can Señora Puig receive us?"

"*Momentico.*" The small door closed.

Wilson turned up the collar of his coat. "What is this? An audience?"

"She has her flair."

"Delusions of grandeur, you mean."

"If you can read the future, you are a person of consequence in Spain."

"I'll give her one more minute."

The heavy door swung open on its hinges with a faint squeak. A small, anemic-looking woman dressed in a black maid's uniform stood in the doorway, her pale face dimly visible in the shadows. Without speaking, she motioned them inside. They pushed past dusty velvet draperies hanging a few feet within the entrance and into a small hallway heavy with heat and the odor of incense. A single lamp with a beaded red shade sat on a narrow, carved ebony table, casting a puddle of light on its polished surface and creating a series of grotesque shapes on the plank floor as it cast the carvings on the table legs into shadow.

The maid gestured toward two straight chairs along the wall and disappeared through a door into the interior of the house. Wilson and Jane Forbes remained standing. He offered her a cigarette, and after lighting it, held the match to his own. He fingered the burnt-out match for a moment, looking for an ashtray, then dropped it on the floor. "At least we are out of the rain and near to the inner sanctum."

Jane Forbes inhaled her cigarette's smoke deeply and smiled at him. "But isn't it fun? I'll go first."

"Do we do this separately?"

"Of course. You'd learn all of my secrets."

The maid reappeared and nodded. Jane Forbes smiled at Wilson and followed her through the door. Wilson dropped down on one of the chairs, unbuttoned his damp coat and sat hunched over, legs apart, resting his arms on his legs and staring at the cigarette he held between them. In the closed, draftless room the smoke hung suspended just above the floor. He felt the tickle of perspiration on his forehead.

It was over fifteen minutes before Jane Forbes reappeared. She smiled at him. "She's really remarkable. I don't know how she learns all of these things."

He wiped his face irritably with a handkerchief.

"Well, let's go. I'll skip my session with Madam X."

"Jack, you must see her. It won't take long."

"I really don't give a damn, sweetie. We've played this one out long enough. Let's go."

She looked at him seriously and laid a hand on his arm. "Jack, this is very important. Do it for me."

He regarded her for a moment through narrowed eyes and then said slowly, "O.K., if that's how it is."

The door opened into a whitewashed room. In contrast to the hallway, it was chill and austere. It contained only a small round table, on which a large candle in a massive brass candlestick guttered and flickered in the draft of the open door, and two heavy chairs. A large imperious-looking woman with dark, vivid coloring and piercing black eyes sat at the table and gestured him into the remaining chair. He sat down. "No crystal ball?"

"We will not progress far, señor, if you are a hostile subject."

"Just consider me an unbeliever trying to accommodate a lady."

"May I see your hand?"

He extended his right hand. She grasped it in a firm grip and studied the palm intently, turning it toward the candlelight. Her black hair was drawn back severely from a central part. Wilson noticed the straight white line of the scalp. There was a little red mole toward the front, just above her forehead.

"Your other hand, señor." She examined it closely and traced a line with a forefinger toward the base of the palm. "You live dangerously, señor."

"You think so?"

"You have a great purpose in life and you will succeed."

"Where do you see that?"

"Here, señor. This line tells me."

"Imagine that." He shifted slightly in his chair. "Now maybe this is beginning to make a little sense. Tell me, am I going to have a beautiful, dark lady come into my life?"

She continued studying his palm without an expression on her face. "I do not know if she will be pretty or dark, but you have many women in your life." She looked up and smiled, showing strong, even, white teeth. "You are a virile man, señor, *un hombre*, a man women like. You have only to be patient and the woman you seek will come to you."

"When?"

"Patience." She released his hand. "That is all I see, señor. Two hundred pesetas, *por favor*."

Wilson took out his wallet and put two one-hundred peseta notes before her.

She inclined her head, and picking up the money, slipped it into a pocket in her dress. "*Gracias, señor. Vaya con dios.*"

Wilson got up and re-entered the entrance hall. Jane Forbes was not waiting for him. He hesitated and

then noticed a slip of paper on the table. He snatched it up and read: *Jack, I have had to return to Madrid at once. Please forgive me. Jane.* He crumbled up the paper in one hand and shoved it into his coat pocket. Wrenching open the door into the inner room, he plunged back inside. The room was empty and in darkness, the acrid odor of the snuffed candle still hanging in the air. He quickly ranged throughout the house, throwing open doors and running from room to room on all of its three narrow floors. It was unfurnished and neglected except for the hallway and the room in which his palm had been read, and he was the only human being in it. The fortuneteller's cat had been left behind. It cowered in a corner of the hallway, looking at Wilson with large yellow eyes.

He walked back in the rain to his car and drove to Madrid in a rage of frustration. What in hell was going on? Who was this Forbes dame? Did she have any connection with Slade and with the fortuneteller? Did any of them have a connection with Cuba? Or was it a different game? Had Jane Forbes been kidnapped? He didn't even know if that note was in her handwriting. Cursing under his breath, he pushed the accelerator farther toward the floorboard.

He parked across the street from the apartment building on Calle de O'Donnell. Glancing up at Jane Forbes's windows, he noted that they were dark. He walked across the street and rang her doorbell with several long peals. There was no answer. He stood before the apartment house uncertainly for a moment, then he recrossed the street and stood in the shadows cast by the trees. He waited because he could think of nothing else he could do.

Over a half-hour had passed when a taxi drew up before the apartment house and a familiar, slight figure got out. It was Slade. He paid off the driver and

stood for a moment on the sidewalk after the cab had disappeared down the street, inspecting a group of keys in the light cast from the apartment house lobby. Wilson waited until he had stepped up into the outside lobby and then sprinted across the street. Slade looked up, saw Wilson's charging figure, and became panic-stricken. He first tried to open the locked door, then sensing that he was trapped, tried to run down the stairs of the outside lobby into the street. Wilson cornered him before he could do so and knocked him back against the lobby wall with a hard blow of his outstretched palm. He wrenched the keys from Slade's unresisting hand.

"All right, you little bastard. Now we are going to talk." Shoving Slade before him, he fumbled with the keys with one hand, trying to find the one that fit the lock. Slade, feeling Wilson's grip on his arm relax, suddenly tore himself free and darted across the street and into the darkness.

Wilson gave a curse and ran across the street after Slade, but quickly realizing that pursuit was hopeless, returned to the apartment house door and soon found a key that admitted him to the inner lobby. He rode the elevator up to the fifth floor and listened for a moment at Jane Forbes's door. There was no sound. Carefully inserting the same key into the doorlock, he soundlessly turned the tumblers and released the latch. The door fell open. He stepped inside, listening intently. Except for the ticking of a clock somewhere in the living room, there was no sound. He walked quickly through the living room, the single bedroom, the bathroom, and the kitchen that comprised the apartment, throwing open closet doors as he went. He was alone. Standing in the shadows of the unlighted living room, he lit a cigarette. Whatever Slade wanted, it evidently was in this apartment. He sat down in a chair

and hooking a second chair with one foot, pulled it over as a footrest. He might as well be comfortable. He had smoked three cigarettes when he heard an automobile stop outside the apartment. Wilson stepped to the window and looked down. A black sedan was parked below. As he watched, its door opened and Jane Forbes got out. She leaned over and talked earnestly to someone in the car and then, with a slight wave of her hand, walked toward the apartment entrance.

Wilson moved back from the window and settled himself in a chair facing the apartment door. He heard the sound of the elevator and footsteps moving toward the door. It swung open and a figure groped for a light switch. The room flared into brightness. For a moment Jane Forbes did not see Wilson's motionless form in the chair as her eyes adjusted to the light, then they widened slightly and she became motionless. "Wilson!" she breathed and smiled uncertainly.

"Yeah, the old boy friend from Segovia, sweetie. Remember? Palmistry, fortune cookies, tea leaves, all that stuff."

She moved into the room her eyes still fixed on him and shut the door. "How did you get into my apartment?"

"With a key. They seem to be around."

She did not pursue this. She laid her purse on a table and dropped onto the sofa, her legs tucked under her. She gazed at him thoughtfully, the tip of her tongue unconsciously moving back and forth between her lips. "I am sorry that I had to run out on you in Segovia."

"Don't give it a thought. It was a perfectly natural thing to do."

"I said that I'm sorry."

"I thought that you had been kidnapped."

She relaxed imperceptibly. "No." She continued

to regard him intently, an expression of withdrawn calculation on her face.

"Would you mind telling me what in hell this is all about?"

She got up and walked over to him. Her fingers pushed gently through his hair. "I can't just yet, Jack, but I didn't leave you in Segovia because I wanted to."
"No?"

She sat down on the arm of his chair and put a warm, soft hand inside his shirt front. "No," she whispered. "I had to. What I wanted was you. I am so glad that you came here. This is where I wanted you. This is where I would have brought you if something had not interfered."

He pushed her chin gently with one fist. "Imagine that!" he said huskily.

She slipped down upon him and her warm, full lips found his as her body pressed tightly against his with a tremble of anticipation.

THREE

THEY had a late breakfast of bacon and eggs on a little table Jane Forbes had set up in her living room. Wilson sipped a cup of coffee gratefully and rubbed his forehead.

"A headache?" she asked.

"No, just the wine. We must have drunk a case."

"Not quite."

"Baby, you're some torpedo."

She grinned, a tight, crooked grin. "Thanks, pal."

He yawned widely and stretched. "Let's go back to bed."

She looked at him with a little wrinkle of distaste. "That was last night. This is the morning."

He grinned. "O.K., I was just bragging. I'm not really up to it. He took another sip of coffee. "Come on, sweetie, level with me. Who is this guy Slade?"

"I don't care to tell you," she replied evenly, brushing her long hair back from one cheek with the back of her hand.

"You don't deny knowing him?"

"I don't deny it."

"That's where I got the key to your apartment,"
"I know. Believe it or not, it's the only key I
don't have in my possession."

He reached into a pocket and gave her Slade's
ring of keys. "Here you are . . . a bonus."

She took the keys without comment and laid
them on an end table. Wilson lit a cigarette. "I guess
that is all you care to say."

"Right." She nodded positively and began re-
moving dishes from the table.

"You don't work for a Spanish bank."

"Yes, I do, but not for a living. It's a good front."
She chuckled him under the chin. "And you aren't in the
export-import business."

He laughed shortly. "Not for a living, that's for
sure." He looked at the smoke rising from the end of his
cigarette. "So, O.K., we both got our doubts. Maybe
we should let it go at that."

She finished clearing the table and sat down on
a straight chair facing him. She shook a cigarette out of
a pack and lit it. Her appraisal of him was cold and im-
personal.

He shifted self-consciously under her gaze. "You
got a problem, sweetie? All at once you look like you
would like to spill my guts for me."

She made an impatient gesture and pointed a
finger. "What is the value of that ring on your finger?"

A little smile which had been playing about
Wilson's lips disappeared, and for a moment he did not
respond.

He drew on his cigarette, then he replied slowly.
"Two hundred and twenty dollars."

Her eyes were an ice-blue, the dark pupils
slightly dilated. "Canadian or U.S.?"

"Canadian."

"Including tax?"

"Yes, at three per cent." Wilson grinned crook-
edly. "Well, I'll be damned. That's the drill. Then you
are his sister."

"Yes."

"And your name isn't Jane Forbes," he added
stupidly, still slightly confused.

"Why should my name be Jane Forbes?"

He made an indefinite gesture with his right
hand and was silent for a moment.

"You do that all-American girl bit real well. I'd
never guess that you are Cuban."

"You forget that we used to learn English with
our Spanish in Cuba, beginning in nursery school. After
primary school I spent nine months each year at a girls
school in Connecticut."

"The blue eyes, the chestnut hair?"

"Cubans come in all shapes, colors, and sizes,
Mr. Wilson. As a devoted girl watcher, you should
know that. I am just not the swarthy type you are used
to."

"Mr. Wilson? Oh, now, honey, we just slept to-
gether, remember?"

"This is strictly business from now on, Chico. I
had to be sure of you before I dared talk with you. I
couldn't risk my brother's position if you were a silly
male gossip. You kept your story straight and you
didn't say anything you shouldn't. They say that even
the best will give it away in bed after a few drinks. You
even passed that test, so I will listen to what you have
to say."

"You act like you didn't enjoy it. I know damn
well that you did."

Her lips formed a tight, sardonic smile. "I en-
joyed it and it's all over. Now, what are you here for, to

justify your sex appeal or to give your message for my brother?"

Wilson's expression changed and his jaw line hardened.

"Do you know why I am here?"

"I have an idea, but you tell me."

"The people I speak for want the number-one boy out of the game for keeps."

"Look, Wilson, tell me the offer, factually and completely, no phony clichés, no cute talk, no gripping narrative; just who, what, where, when, and how much—in that order. Right?"

He flushed. "O.K., baby. The Americans want your brother to take the Cuban army and seize the government of Cuba. Fidel, Raul, and all of the other Communists must be imprisoned or killed. None are to remain in Cuba. Your brother's government must be pro United States and support its foreign policy. If it does, it will get the economic and military support it needs to survive. The timing, execution, and the details are up to your brother."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing else. Just a simple, straightforward request: throw the bum out."

The ice-blue eyes never left his. "How much?"

"Ten thousand dollars deposited now in an unnumbered account in a Zürich bank as earnest money. One million dollars will be deposited in this account when your brother agrees to make the attempt. We'll give you a code message to send when he accepts. Ten million dollars more will be deposited in the account when the coup d'état is successful and your brother is firmly in control. If your brother can so discredit Castro that his reputation as a revolutionary leader is destroyed, a second ten million dollars will be deposited."

"We shall probably kill Castro. Slowly, if possible, so that he can be reminded of all of his crimes."

"That's of no concern to us. Just try to see that he has the reputation dead of a Mussolini, not Joan of Arc. There's ten million in it."

The girl took an offered cigarette and let him light it. Her face was cold and set. "Do you know who my brother is?"

"No. I'm not in on that. I suppose he is one of the top military boys or he couldn't pull this off."

"But you don't know which one?"

"No."

She looked at him. "Is this the CIA?"

"I don't know that either. It's the Americans, or so they tell me."

Her expression softened slightly. "You don't know much, do you, Wilson?"

"I know all that I need to know."

"What's in it for you?"

"Money."

She nodded and regarded the end of her cigarette for a moment. "I hope that it is enough." She looked up at him. "This is a big risk for us to take. We'll have to spread some of the money around."

"I am not authorized to bargain, but, remember, you will have Cuba."

Her mouth twisted into a little cruel smile. "Yes, we shall have Cuba." Her thoughts turned inward for a moment. "How nice!" There were lines of concentration around her narrowed eyes. "How do we operate the Swiss bank account?"

"You and I go to Zürich and you satisfy yourself that the account is set up in your name. Thereafter it is identified only by a number. We put money in it according to the schedule. You are the only person who can draw it out. It's that simple."

"And the code message to send if my brother accepts?"

"I'll give you that in Zürich. I'll also give you the cable address."

She was quiet a moment, then her eyes slid over him. "My brother may want to hear all of this from you in person," she said slowly. "It is very important. We have to rely on you, on your character."

"Then there is the money," he reminded her dryly. "One million ten thousand dollars in a Swiss bank account before you even get your feet wet. Not bad."

"Will you go to Havana if he wants to see you?"

"Yes. We figured on that. I'll be selling spare parts for Sail Exports."

"You might go and he would never see you. It might be too dangerous. You must expect that."

Wilson laughed. "That's O.K. I get paid for the trip anyway."

She arose and looked out of the window at the green of the newly leafed trees. "I shall fly to Zürich in the morning," she said into the silence. "I shall be at the Baur au Lac. Wait a day or two before you come, and choose another hotel. I think it is important that we see no more of one another from now on than is absolutely necessary."

He got up from his chair. "I'm on my way, baby. Action is my middle name."

He was surprised when she found that remark so funny.

FOUR

THE midmorning Iberian Airlines Caravel from Madrid swung in a wide, descending arc over Zürich airport and, penetrating the cloud cover at fifteen hundred feet, landed with a muted squeak of its tires on the wet tarmac of runway number two. Wilson, emerging from the overheated air of the crowded plane, shivered slightly in the chill of the mist and the rain and hurried into the antiseptic cleanliness of the blue and aluminum airport terminal.

After clearing immigration control, he stood near one end of the long, low, luggage counter that circled the customs area and lit a cigarette. He was relaxed and watched the crowd of deplaning passengers idly. He hummed a Broadway show tune as his bags cleared customs and a burly baggage porter carried them to a waiting taxi. As he got into the cab, his attention was caught by a reflection in the window. It looked like Slade moving through the throng of people behind

him toward an entrance to the airport. Wilson spun around, but there was no sign of the man he had seen. He hesitated, one hand on the door handle. The taxi driver opened the door from the inside and spoke in German-accented English.

"Where to, sir?"

"The Savoy Baur en Ville," Wilson said absently. He telephoned Jane Forbes from his hotel room. Her voice was coolly businesslike. "Good. I'm glad you are here. Why don't you take me to lunch at the Baur au Lac Grillroom. Can we finish our business this afternoon?"

"I have a telephone call to make, then I'll be over. I think we can finish everything up in an hour or two."

"I hope so. I have a flight to Madrid this evening."

Wilson hung up, found a number in the telephone book from his night table drawer, and gave the number to the hotel operator.

"Bitte?" An expressionless voice answered.

"This is the car dealer. Do you have the money?"

"Yes," the voice said slowly. A pause. "What is the mileage on the car?"

"Seven thousand, two hundred twenty-seven kilometers."

"I'll leave an envelope with your hotel concierge early this afternoon."

"When?"

"I can't say precisely." The telephone clicked and went dead.

Wilson decided to walk the short distance down Bahnhofstrasse to the Talstrasse entrance of the Baur au Lac Grillroom. He left his wet raincoat in the cloakroom, and stepping into a carpeted hallway of the hotel, called Jane Forbes on a house phone.

"This is Jack. I'm in the Grill."

"I'll be right down."

"I'll get a table. A dry martini?"

"Make it a double."

"Right."

She looked radiantly beautiful and fresh as she walked across the dining room to where he sat at an isolated little table in a corner. She smiled at him as she sat down. "Did you have a good flight?"

"A little bumpy over the Pyrenees. Otherwise as smooth as silk."

She sipped her martini. "Have you ordered for us?"

"No. Any ideas?"

"Whatever you like."

Wilson ordered them a puréed vegetable soup and a shrimp salad. "I thought I saw that guy Slade at the airport," he said after the waiter had left them.

"You may well have. He arrived this morning."

"Who is he?"

"He works for me. Don't worry about him."

"He tried to compromise me the second day I was in Madrid, claiming he worked for the United States Embassy."

"We were testing your sense of security. Don't worry about it."

"Does the fortuneteller work for you too?"

She smiled. "No, she doesn't. I am sorry about that, but when Slade lit his cigarette on that dark street in Segovia, it meant that he had to speak with me at once. We talked in the back of the fortuneteller's house, and when I realized that I had to return alone to Madrid, I paid her to delay you so that I could get away. Poor old gal, she was scared to death, but she couldn't resist the money."

Wilson toyed with his martini and shifted un-

comfortably. "How many people are in on this Cuban deal?"

She shook her head decisively. "On my brother's business there is only me. He insists that we fully trust only each other. But I have been in Spain for five years. I have assumed a new identity. I must live. I have a small organization including Slade, but they know nothing of Cuba or of my real identity."

"Do you have an American passport?"

"Yes. I was born in Miami while my mother was there on a visit." She sipped her cocktail. "I have changed my name, of course, but one can do that legally. Only you connect Jane Forbes of Madrid with a Cuban revolutionary officer in Havana. Don't try to trace the connection through my passport. You will waste your time. He is my half brother, with an entirely different name."

"I won't try."

"You can see why I had to be sure of you before I told you I was the woman you came to Spain to find."

"What about the Cuban underground?"

"My brother is an underground leader. He has many brave friends who would die for him without hesitation, but most Cubans talk too much. They cannot keep a secret. So my brother's identity is known only to very few in Cuba. Few Cubans knew and even fewer remember that my brother had a half sister. No one knows my present name or where I live or what I now look like. The Americans were told only that I might talk to you if you came to Madrid."

They were silent while the waiter served them. Jane Forbes looked up with a little smile. "You see, Wilson, you are the dangerous one, not me. You are the American agent, not me. If there had been a breach of security among the Americans, a double agent or a counter-spy, then my brother's enemies would try to fol-

low you to me. Slade and others of my friends have watched you from the moment you arrived in Europe to see if someone else were following you. Of course they do not know why I am interested in you."

"I guess I was clean."

"Yes. Congratulations." She let him light her cigarette across the table. "Until we were certain that you were not being followed and until I was sure that you were a reliable professional, I didn't dare to talk with you. That was the reason for the boy-meets-girl act, the charades, and the tourist's tramp around Madrid and Segovia. If you were not secure, I had to have a reason for being with you. If you had been insecure, we would have had a lovers' quarrel and that would have been that. You never would have found your Cuban woman in Madrid."

"You are taking a chance meeting me in Zürich, though. How could you explain that to a double agent?"

"I couldn't. It is a risk I can't avoid, but I am now sure it is a very small risk."

The waiter served them their salad. When he left, Jane Forbes continued. "He wants you to go to Havana now. He is interested in what you have told me, but he wants to question you in person."

"O.K. I thought he would. How do I reach him?"

"He will know that you are there. He will seek you out if it is safe and if he feels that you are reliable."

"Just as you did in Madrid."

"We learned long ago, my brother and I, always to take the initiative and always to be able to retreat. We still survive because we learned that very early in life."

"How will I know your brother?"

"Do you remember the address and number of my apartment in Madrid?"