

The Mystery of The Secret Signal

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IN KEEPING with the spirit of the times, we have for you today one of those tough, hard-boiled detective stories. Its title: "The Mystery of the Secret Signal."

The strong, silent hero's name is Dick. He is very silent lately. His fun-loving comical sidekick's name is Henry. He is very comical lately.

Our story opens in the eerie, fog-shrouded Oval Office. Henry is lounging in a chair, sipping Mumm's and leafing through Playboy while making notes in a black address book. Dick is silently pacing the floor. Suddenly, he whirls on Henry.

"Hark!" he says. "Did you hear a faint beep-beepidy-beep-beep?"

"Nein," says Henry, "not even vun little bip."

"Strange," says Dick, frowning. "If I have made one thing perfectly clear, it is that I cannot stop the bombing until I hear The Secret Signal. Are you sure you got the message to them at those last negotiating sessions in Paris?"

Henry nods. "I told them, 'Vee haf vays of making you talk peace.'"

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DICK RESUMES his pacing. "I know my sensitive, finely-tuned ears will recognize The Secret Signal when it comes. After all, how long can they hold out? My B-52s are flattening their cities."

"Ah," says Henry, "the power of your bombs vill . . ."

"Not my bombs, you idiot," snaps Dick, "my B-52s. If I have made another thing perfectly clear, it is that the damage to their cities is caused by my B-52s falling on them. They can't support the weight of all those B-52s falling on them much longer. First, they'll release my POWs . . ."

"And ven they do," says Henry, "your triumph will be doubled."

"It vill?" says Dick. "I mean, it will?"

"Jawohl!" says Henry. "They vill have twice as many to release."

"Good thinking," says Dick. "Listen! The phone! Answer it, Henry. Maybe it's The Secret Signal."

"Hello?" says Henry, picking up the receiver. He scowls. "I told you neffer to call me at the office."

"Was it The Secret Signal?" asks Dick eagerly.

"Not yours," says Henry, hanging up.

"Hmmm," says Dick. "Hand me the paper. Maybe they put The Secret Signal in the personals. You know: 'Dick, all forgiven. Call soonest. Le Duc Tho.' But first, I'll glance at the front page."

"I wouldn't," says Henry nervously.

"Let's see," says Dick. "The Swedes are comparing me to Hitler. Well, there goes the old Nobel Peace Prize. And the Pope says . . . No, that's not The Secret Signal. I thought us peacemakers were blessed. And Hanoi says it will only sign the October 20 agreement. That's not it. And France . . . Who cares what a lot of foreigners think! Wait! What's this?"

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HENRY BOUNCES out of his chair. "At last! You haf found The Secret Signal?"

"Listen to this," says Dick. "Peace vigils are spreading. Demonstrators are going to try to wreck my Inaugural. Congress is up in arms. A Republican senator says I've taken leave of my senses. The whole country's turning against me. Henry! Announce that peace is at hand."

"Still?" says Henry.

"I'm stopping the bombing." Dick taps the paper grimly. "I just received The Secret Signal."