

# A Spy Thriller That's a Wonder



## Arthur Hoppe

**SCENE:** The studios of Wonder Productions. ("If it's a good movie, it's a Wonder!")

The veteran producer, Sol Hepatica, cigar in mouth, is listening to his eager young writer, Fred Frisbee, who is trying to sell him a script.

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**Frisbee:** You'll love it, chief. It's called, "Watergate!" And it's a spy thriller, see . . .

**Sol** (rubbing his hands): Good, good. I made a hundred spy thrillers in my day and they spell b-o-x-o-f-i-c-e.

**Frisbee:** Anyway you spell it, chief, it's great. It's about this dedicated little band of spies, see, who go around saving the country by burglarizing psychiatrists' offices, taking down names at radical demonstrations and wiretapping apartments of subversives. They wear red wigs the CIA gave them and . . .

**Sol:** Red wigs?

**Frisbee:** We'll shoot it in Technicolor. Now the hero's name is Jim and he's been in the business 20 years. You know, like Richard Burton in "The Spy Who Came In From the Cold."

**Sol:** That was a winner. So you open, as usual, with Jim getting his orders from the man on top.

**Frisbee:** Well, no. He gets his orders from a guy who gets his orders from a guy who gets his orders from the man on top.

**Sol:** That's a smart new gimmick. I think.

**Frisbee:** So finally Jim gets his orders for the big caper: sneak into the enemy's headquarters and plant a bug.

**Sol:** That's a great scene. All alone, he crawls through the air vent . . . Maybe I can get Hitchcock to direct.

**Frisbee:** Well, actually, he walks in the front door with two friends and four Cubans.

**Sol:** Cubans?

**Frisbee:** They want to save the country from Fidel Castro.

**Sol:** Why's he need a small army to plant a bug?

**Frisbee:** He's also fighting rising unemployment. But wait'll you hear this wrinkle: they cleverly tape the latches of all the doors so they can get out.

**Sol:** Any door you can get in, you can get out. But they pull off the caper?

**Frisbee:** No, they get caught.

**Sol:** Great! I've shot it a hundred times. The enemy counter agents surround them, guns drawn . . .

**Frisbee:** No, they get caught by the janitor who calls two cops and . . .

**Sol:** Okay, so they shoot it out with the cops, bullets flying, blood spattering . . .

**Frisbee:** No, they throw up their hands because the two cops have got them surrounded. But the man on top disavows them. Vigorously.

**Sol:** Well, I'm glad you got something traditional in there. So they got no choice but to swallow their cyanide capsules. They'd rather die than talk. Right?

**Frisbee:** Well, actually, they all hire lawyers and rat on each other.

**Sol** (incredulously): You ever seen a spy thriller, kid?

**Frisbee:** And the higher-ups all begin ratting on each other. But in the end it turns out they saved the country after all, just as they intended.

**Sol:** From the radical subversives?

**Frisbee:** No, from the Democrats. Now the female lead's a middle-aged blonde named Martha and she . . .

**Sol:** No violence and now no sex. Well, it might make a one-reeler.

**Frisbee:** Gosh, that's great, chief. Shall I see if I can get Richard Burton?

**Sol** (crushing out his cigar): No, The Three Stooges.