

A Crazy Plot



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Arthur Hoppe

IT'S ALWAYS SAD to see a brilliant, charming lady go bonkers. My friend, Rachelle Marshall, thinks a Southern California man and his wife were picked up in Los Angeles and whisked off across the Pacific Ocean.

"By a UFO?" I asked politely.

"No, by a Communist 707 airliner," she said. "It landed at L.A. International Airport in broad daylight."

"And this couple was kidnaped?"

"No, I don't think so. They were smiling and waving. I think they were definitely fellow travelers."

"What does this man do?"

"He's a retired civil servant. Supposedly."

"But why would the Commies risk landing at one of our major airports to pick up some retired old civil servant?"

"Secrets," said Mrs. Marshall. "This man knows every top secret in our files."

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I THOUGHT I'd better humor her. "A real masterspy, eh?" I said.

"All I know," she said, "is that this man spent 30 years posing as an anti-Communist while he worked his way up in government. Then, when he reached the top, he publicly made friends with them."

"Incredible! But if he were in the pay of the Commies, wouldn't he be more valuable to them in his government job?"

"He would, but he got caught with

his hand in the cookie jar — lying, cheating, bribing, you name it. They were going to try him for high crimes and misdemeanors, so he had to quit in disgrace."

"And now the Commies have whisked him off to face the music for his failure, right?"

"Oh, no," she said. "They welcomed him with open arms. He spent hours and hours talking to their very highest leaders."

"What about?"

"The talks were secret, naturally. But he was seen in public standing to applaud a Chinese song about the Communists capturing Taiwan."

"Maybe he didn't understand Chinese," I said.

"Maybe."

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"LOOK HERE," I said a bit testily. "President Ford would never allow a publicly-disgraced, politically-unstable, demonstrably-untrustworthy shady character to fly off in a Communist airliner with all our top secrets in his head."

"Mr. Ford says he doesn't know anything about it. He says the man's a private citizen and what he does is his own business. In fact, Mr. Ford says he doesn't even want to talk to him when he comes back."

"Back! You mean this man's coming back?"

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Marshall with an Ophelia-like smile. (Poor thing.) "He thinks this trip will improve his image."