

*When the mice are away, the cat will play. In honor of the Ninth Jixanny, we offer a glimpse of what Miss Trask just might have been up to while the Bob-Whites were in Happy Valley, having their ninth adventure. This takes place in “pre-political correctness” times—our country was at war—and so, in the interest of realism, we’ve written this to reflect such. The characters’ dialects, terms for those of a foreign nature, and views do not necessarily reflect ours.*

**Trask. Miss Trask.**

*By Bonnie, Dana, and Mary*

*Sleepyside-on-Hudson, New York  
April 1944*

Miss Trask settled down in a comfortable chair in the Wheeler library, ready to read the new book that everyone was talking about, *Anna and the King of Siam*. Her blue eyes sparkled at the prospect of reading the novel without interruption. Her young charges and their friends had been invited to spend a week on a farm outside of Des Moines, Iowa, and she expected a restful week of nothing but peace and quiet.

*Odd, that,* Miss Trask reflected as she opened the book to the first page, *a sheep farmer being able to afford all of those last-minute plane tickets.* But as it was really none of her concern how Trixie’s uncle had managed to fly all of the children—minus Dan who had stayed behind to be tutored—from New York to Iowa, she dismissed the thought as the words on the page took her back to Bangkok in 1862, her mind filled with images of the Englishwoman in lavender arriving in Siam on the *Chow Phya*.

Unfortunately, she was only a few pages into the captivating story when a jingling sound filled the otherwise silent room. Miss Trask looked down at her shoe with alarm.

Were they really re-activating her after so much time? True, her country *was* at war, and the Agency had instructed her, until further notice, to always wear the sensible oxfords with the hidden communication device so that they could be in instant contact if need be. She hadn’t received that “further notice” as of yet...

The jingling became more insistent, and Miss Trask knew that she could not ignore it. The simple act of removing her shoe and activating the communication device was second nature, even after so long.

“Agent seven-double-oh,” she said into the phone, hoping that no hesitancy showed in her voice, but she had no reason to worry. Her low, well-modulated voice sounded as crisp and efficient as ever.

“Agent 700,” the brisk voice on the other side of the receiver said. “Your country once again needs you.”

“Of course,” Miss Trask said, any hesitancy gone on hearing that her country needed her. “How can I be of service?”

“It is no coincidence that you have obtained a post as the governess of Miss Madeleine Wheeler. Her father has been under precautionary surveillance for some time. His company is developing a top secret device that will help us and our allies win the war in Europe, and we have known for some time that he has been the interest of foreign spies. Intelligence indicates that the threats are increasing, and he has become a target. It is your duty to keep him alive until the device is perfected.”

Miss Trask’s brain was reeling. Her job as Honey’s governess was not a coincidence? She had been set up all along to protect—not Honey—but her *father*? Miss Trask clamped down hard on these thoughts, knowing that she did not have the luxury of dwelling on that now. She had a job to do. “Of course. I will protect Matthew Wheeler with my life. Is there anything else?”

“Yes, but this transmission has gone on long enough, and we do not want it to be traced. Further instructions can be found in the boathouse.” With that, the line went dead. Miss Trask hurriedly replaced her sensible oxford. Soon, she was exiting the Manor House into the cool crispness of the spring air. As she approached the boathouse, she thought back to when she was a young girl of eighteen. She had been a tall, willowy redhead in her youth, with a flawless peaches-and-cream complexion. She’d also been headstrong and exuberant as she pursued her first operations following her exhaustive training. She smiled fondly as she recalled particularly memorable assignments, an adventure in Paris and a mission in Munich.

*Those were the days!*

Even after all of this time she felt that familiar excitement burgeoning deep within her. She reached the boathouse, and after a quick inspection of the interior, she found the missive that she sought.

The Agency has become aware that a spy (or spies) from a hostile government, most likely one of the Axis nations, has recently infiltrated Sleepyside in an attempt to assassinate local businessman Matthew Wheeler. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to ascertain the identity of the spy and take him into custody. This message will self destruct in five seconds.

And sure enough, the message in her hands disappeared in a puff of smoke.

“I’ll never figure out how they do that,” Miss Trask—Agent 700—muttered to herself, her sharp mind already working on the problem at hand.

As she walked back to the Manor House, she realized that she had a certain number of advantages. Sleepyside was a small town in which everyone knew everyone else. Obviously, her list of suspects could be narrowed to exclude life-long residents of the little village, such as the Beldens, the Lynches, Mr. Maypenny, Mr. Lytell, and Mrs. Vanderpoel.

She chuckled to herself as she reached the front door of the Manor House and let herself in its comforting warmth. *How fortuitous that most of the Bob-Whites are in Iowa!* she thought to herself. *With Trixie’s nose for trouble, she would be sure to find her way into the middle of all of this.*

Miss Trask returned to the library, the book that she had looked so forward to reading completely forgotten. She settled herself down at the desk, picked up the Waterman fountain pen, and began to compose a list of suspects from what she knew of the residents of Sleepyside.

*A visit to Mr. Maypenny or Mrs. Vanderpoel might be in order*, she reflected. They would know who had recently relocated to town. She briefly considered subtly interviewing Mr. Lytell, who would also certainly know, as nosy as he was, but he was a suspicious, gossipy type, so she decided to call on him as a last resort.

Realizing that her employ had obviously been prearranged—although *how* she did not know—Miss Trask realized that the Agency must have known Matthew Wheeler’s life was in danger when she had entered his employ. It stood to reason that the foreign spies had probably come to Sleepyside just after Matthew Wheeler had moved his family to the little burg, thinking that they would have a better chance of keeping him under surveillance in the sleepy little town instead of in the bustling metropolis of New York City. Here there were no crowds into which he could disappear, no doorman to bar entry into a building, and no dizzying heights. The Manor House was easily accessible from the ground, and it was surrounded by woods. Anyone could hide among the trees and spy to their heart’s content. To monitor Mr. Wheeler while he relaxed in his Manhattan penthouse a spy would need one of those brand-new military rotary-wing aircrafts, the helicopter.

*Or be King Kong*, Miss Trask thought wryly.

She looked down at the blank sheet of paper in front of her and frowned. Who was new in town? Who had arrived since she herself had?

She hesitated before writing “Hakaito brothers” in her smooth, flowing handwriting.

She was not sure when the Hakaito brothers had come to Sleepyside, but their accents told her that they were not natives. They had a truck farm outside of the village and sold their produce in a little shop in town.

“That’s a little obvious, don’t you think, Trask?” Miss Trask muttered to herself. “Just because they’re Japanese doesn’t mean that they’re spies.” Wouldn’t the spy try to assimilate himself better into Sleepyside, posing as an American? Then again, maybe the Hakaito brothers were savvy enough to realize that two Japanese citizens would look so obvious at first glance that they would quickly be dismissed as suspects. Maybe they were counting on that.

Miss Trask let the names stand and continued to think. “Doc Tremaine” she added to the list. Dr. Ferris had been the village doctor for quite some time, but he had recently accepted another doctor into the practice.

*Sleepyside only really needs one doctor, so why did this other one suddenly shown up?* Miss Trask wondered.

After a half-hour of considerable deliberation, Miss Trask had several names with which to start, including Mr. Martin, the new toy shop owner; Miss Elliman, the new first grade teacher; and Miss Jones, the new guidance counselor at Sleepyside Junior-Senior High School.

*That should be enough for now, Miss Trask thought with satisfaction as she looked at her list. I'll investigate these people first. If I clear them, then I'll open my search to people who relocated to Sleepyside just before the Wheelers did and talk to Mr. Maypenny or Mrs. Vanderpoel.*

With that, she began her mission of determining who wanted to kill her employer.

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The sign in the front window of the produce market indicated that the Hakaito brothers wouldn't be opening for the day until after lunch. A few poorly constructed sentences offered a vague reason why.

"Hmm..." Miss Trask murmured under her breath. "That certainly seems suspicious, or am I merely on ultra high alert since receiving my assignment?" Still, it seemed very odd to her educated mind that anyone, even non-natives to her country, could have such poor grammar and spelling skills.

*Almost as if they were purposely trying to convince people they were unschooled,* she thought, with one eyebrow raised skeptically.

"I'll come back here before I return to the Manor House," she determined with a brisk nod of her head. The day was clear and sunny, downtown foot traffic was light, and she decided to leave the car in front of the produce shop and walk over to the junior-senior high school to talk to the new guidance counselor, Miss Jones.

*Jones? Likely name.* She shook her head, wondering how she could've become so out of practice that she was instantly suspecting Japanese-Americans and single women named Jones.

She was so lost in her mental investigating that she started when a familiar voice came from behind her.

"Good morning, Miss Trask. What brings you to town today?"

She turned and smiled at the dark young man standing before her. "Hello, Daniel. I could ask you the same question."

Hefting the armful of books in his hands, he said, "Tutoring session at the school."

"Of course. How's that going?"

"Okay. Some of the classes have been easy to catch up on, but my only foreign language skills consist of curse words in French and Spanish. I don't think Principal Stratton was too impressed by that."

It was nice to see a smile instead of a scowl on Dan Mangan's face. Only two months removed from his street life in New York City and he was already a changed person. She knew they all had the Bob-Whites to thank for that.

“I’m heading for the school myself,” she said, quickly coming up with an excuse Dan would find plausible. “I’m dropping off some signed permission forms for Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler, so that Jim and Honey can go on a couple of school field trips later this spring.”

The two walked together for a few blocks, Dan’s long-legged stride easily keeping up with Miss Trask’s short but very brisk pace. As they approached the corner of Main and Elm, she noticed a nondescript man of indeterminate age handing out what appeared to be religious pamphlets. Dan waved him away. Undeterred, he firmly pressed a leaflet into Miss Trask’s hand, holding her gaze steadily as he said, “For you, sister.”

Her heart skipped a beat as she clutched the paper and nodded, turning away immediately so as not to attract undue attention.

“Sister?” Dan laughed. “Did he think you were a nun?”

“Just a common religious phrase,” she replied absently. “Brothers and sisters in Christ.” She carefully peeked inside the brochure, instantly spotting the small, concise handwriting at the top.

*Open Channel D.*

“Daniel, I just remembered a package I need to pick up for Celia at Crimper’s. Why don’t you go on ahead? I can drop off these permission forms later.”

“Would you like me to do it for you?” he asked politely.

Maintaining her relaxed smile, she answered, “No, thank you. I need to speak with Miss Jones as well.”

“Well, maybe I’ll see you again, then. Miss Jones is the one tutoring me in French.”

Miss Trask perked up. “Really? I thought she was a guidance counselor?”

“She is, but she’s also fluent in a few languages, so she tutors students on the side.”

*Fluent in several languages? That’s very interesting. I’m sure the Agency will think so as well.* Her own Spanish skills had proven very handy in the early days of her career.

“Very well. Perhaps I’ll see you later then.” She waved good-bye to Dan, entered Crimper’s Department Store, and looked for an inconspicuous place to work.

For obvious reasons, holding a ringing shoe to your ear wasn’t terribly subtle in public places. Therefore, other forms of communication had to be made available to agents in the field. Pulling a pen out of the breast pocket of her trim tweed suit, she pulled the cap up, aligned it precisely with her engraved initials on the body of the pen, and pressed it back down firmly. Taking a furtive glance around her, she brought the pen up and whispered, “Channel D open.”

“Identity.”

She knew the low voice on the other end wasn't asking for *her* identity, but was initiating the code word relay that would verify the authenticity of the agents on either end of the line. A different three-word sequence was used every hour, and the words themselves were rotated on a daily basis and changed out weekly as a defense against counter agents.

"Supremacy," she answered.

"Ultimatum," came the final link. "Good morning, Agent 700. I trust you received your dispatch and are already hard at work?"

"Yes, sir, Agent...?" She hesitated, seeking confirmation on whom she would be working with on this assignment.

"86," he replied.

It was a low number, indicating a very high rank within the Agency. She herself had worked her way up to 700 very quickly as a young woman, before she had been deactivated. She had been told more than once by her superiors that had she remained on active duty, she would've been under 200 by now.

"86," she replied with due respect. "Obviously, Matthew Wheeler's safety is of vital importance to national security to have such a highly ranked agent in charge."

"Indeed. What have you accomplished so far?"

"I've made a list of Sleepyside residents who haven't been here for very long. One or more of them must surely be the assassin we're looking for. I'll interview the Hakaito brothers this afternoon. I was on my way to the school just now to look into Miss Jones' story."

"I understand your wards are out of town, leaving you ample time to work undetected?"

"Yes, Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler's children are in Iowa with the Beldens this week, along with their friend, Diana Lynch."

There was a slight pause before Agent 86 spoke again. "Is there not a seventh member of their group?"

Not questioning how he knew this—any agent that advanced in the hierarchy would certainly know every detail of his assignment—she answered simply, "Yes, Daniel Mangan, but he had to remain behind to be tutored. He came to Sleepyside just a few months ago and is behind in his schoolwork."

"Hmm..."

"Agent 86?"

"New to Sleepyside, you say?"

Miss Trask tried not to laugh at the preposterous image that had popped into her head. “Yes, sir, but he’s only fifteen.”

“Or so he says.”

She didn’t have time to track down completely irrelevant subjects. With a determined and slightly annoyed furrow to her brow, she said briskly, “Daniel Mangan is the nephew of Mr. Wheeler’s long-time groom, Bill Regan. He’s not a suspect.”

“A nephew Bill Regan didn’t know existed until a few months ago, correct? I trust your instincts Agent 700, but you’ve been inactive for some years now and your skills are bound to be a little rusty. I just don’t want to leave any stone unturned.”

She opened her mouth to object, thought better of it, and answered respectfully, “Yes, sir. He’s in a tutoring session at the high school right now, so I can kill two birds with one stone, so to speak.”

“Very good. I want you to use this frequency to check in twice daily with your reports. I expect to arrive in Sleepyside very soon.”

Before she could acknowledge this, or make arrangements to meet, he had disconnected.

Checking her list, she decided to pay a visit to Mr. Bennington at the electrical store just a few doors down before heading to the school. She was still rankled by the idea that Mr. Maypenny’s young charge could be an international spy and suspected Edwin would feel the same way. “Rusty, my foot,” she muttered with an indignant shake of her head. “I’ll show him who’s rusty.”

Miss Trask wrinkled her nose in distaste as she entered the small, rather grimy shop located on Main Street. It had a smell that was equal parts dirt and old coffee, and she wondered how long it had been since Mr. Bennington had bothered to have his windows washed. Really, there was simply no excuse for untidiness—just because this was an electrical store and not a fine clothing shop or something along those lines was no reason to let dust and dirt pile up. She was surprised at the lack of cleanliness—it didn’t seem to fit with what she knew about Mr. Bennington. *Rusty* was still rankling her; she made up her mind to be as thorough as she knew how to be.

There was only one other customer in the store, a man frowning at two different rolls of electrical tape. The counter at the front was unmanned, and since Miss Trask did not recognize the customer, she took the opportunity to subtly make some small talk. By the time Mr. Bennington came through a side door and returned to the area behind the counter, she had discovered that the man, Jack Bauer, was simply passing through Sleepyside, and she had dismissed him from further interrogation.

She pretended to look at light bulbs while Mr. Bennington rang up the sale before she meandered to the counter.

“Good day, Miss Trask,” Mr. Bennington said in clipped, British tones. “May I help you?”

Miss Trask studied the younger man for a moment. He was handsome in a certain, slicked back, dark-haired way that made her think of Richard Conte, an actor who had starred in a movie she'd seen last year about the U.S. Marines called *Guadalcanal Diary*. Military movies always interested her.

Miss Trask thought fast. "Yes. Can you tell me the difference between fluorescent bulbs and incandescent ones?" Fluorescent lighting had come onto the market in 1939 but had just begun to have wide usage in war factories. The average person might not know the answer, but a true electrician should.

Mr. Bennington looked startled for a moment. "Eh...ah, let me see. How can I explain this?" He recovered his composure and smiled. "It would be difficult to explain to somebody who does not work with electronics. I hope I do not offend you by saying this."

Miss Trask smiled in return. "I most certainly am not offended and would appreciate any insights that you could give me."

Mr. Bennington's smile did not waver. "I do beg your pardon, my dear Miss Trask, but I have just received a rather large order of wiring that I must catalog immediately. I hope this isn't an inconvenience for you, but I do need to close up shop for a few hours whilst I take care of this rather annoying business." He came around the corner and gently led her to the door. "I do hope you will call again soon."

Miss Trask didn't say another word, but merely smiled and stepped out of the store as the door clicked behind her. She watched, deep in thought, as Mr. Bennington flipped the "Open" sign over to "Closed".

"Interesting," she said to herself, quietly. "Very interesting."

Making up her mind to delve deeper into the man's history, she returned to the school. The school was mostly deserted thanks to the Easter break, so it was an easy matter for her to make her quiet way down the nearly empty hallways. In her tweed suit and ubiquitous sensible shoes, she didn't look unlike most of the teachers at Sleepyside Junior-Senior High and drew no attention as she reached the office of Miss Jones.

"*Bonjour. Avez-vous dix-huit ans?*" she heard a woman's voice say.

"*Bonjour. Ah vez...*"

"*Av-ay*" a voice corrected.

Miss Trask heard Dan Mangan sigh. "*A VAY vous dix-hit ans?*" he stumbled out.

"*Très bon!*"

Miss Trask peeked around the doorway and saw Miss Jones sitting behind her desk and Dan Mangan sitting in a chair in front of it, his legs sprawled out and his boots crossed on top of each other. She drew quietly back and continued to listen.

*“Bonjour, Je suis un voleur, et Je suis ici à pour voler votre coeur,”* Miss Jones prompted.

After much stumbling, Dan finally managed to repeat the phrase back to Miss Jones’ satisfaction.

After several minutes, Miss Trask decided that, for now, she could tentatively assume that Miss Jones and Dan Mangan were exactly as they appeared—a guidance counselor, who no doubt just wanted to make a little extra money on the side through tutoring, and a student who was never going to speak French without sounding a little like a Mafioso trying to put on airs.

Miss Trask quietly chuckled to herself as she exited the school and headed back to the Hakaitos’ grocery store. She couldn’t let Agent 86’s opinion of her skills cloud her judgment. *If Dan Mangan is an assassin or a spy, she thought, taking an appreciative sniff of the fresh, spring air, then I’m Mata Hari!*

With that thought, she headed back toward the Hakaito brothers’ produce shop. To her satisfaction, the store was now open for business.

As she entered the small shop, overflowing with the aromatic smells of fresh produce, she picked up a basket. Not only would she blend in with those doing their shopping, but the basket would come in handy—the smells were enticing the grey-haired spy to do some shopping. She strode up and down the aisles, pretending to inspect the freshness of the Hakaito brothers’ wares while listening to the conversations of the other shoppers.

The foremost topic of conversation appeared to be the amazing selection, and Miss Trask had to agree. It was April, and many of the crops had barely been planted, let alone harvested. There also was a war on, and everything was in short supply. Except that was not the case here. Miss Trask noted the overflowing displays of various fruits and vegetables and now understood why Cook was such a devotee of shopping here. She also realized that this was why the meals at the Wheelers were always so bountiful. This was very suspicious...very suspicious indeed.

Realizing that the only way to get to the bottom of this was to talk to Oto and Kasyo Hakaito, Miss Trask selected several tomatoes, far too red for this time of season, and placed them into her basket. She then selected several other items and placed them in the basket. She knew that the best way to loosen the Hakaito brothers’ tongues was to appear to be a generous customer.

*Rusty, my eye!* she thought as she approached a short, Oriental man who was diligently stocking oranges into an attractive display. As she moved toward him, her sharp blue eyes noticed a stand advertising something called a daikon, and she knew that she had her opening.

“Excuse me,” she said in her usual crisp manner. “Can I please ask you a question?”

The Oriental man stopped pulling oranges from the crates next to him and smiled at her. He gave her a little bow and said, “Oto Hakaito at your service. How may I help you?”

Miss Trask smiled at him, her instincts liking the man despite her previous suspicions. “Hello, Mr. Hakaito,” she began and gestured toward the display of daikon, “I was wondering what a daikon is.”

“It is mild radish from Japan,” Oto explained.

Miss Trask smiled. "Thank you for explaining." She looked around. "I was just marveling at your selection of fresh fruits and vegetables."

Oto Hakaito beamed at her as he gave her another slight bow. "Thank you very much, miss. Oto and Kasyo take pride in flesh fruit and vegetables."

Miss Trask smiled winningly. "I am quite sure that you do," she said. "These tomatoes are amazing," she complimented as she gestured to the red, ripe globes in her basket. "How do you do it?"

"How you say?" Oto's brow furrowed, and Miss Trask presumed that he was trying to translate his Japanese thoughts to English. Oto's face cleared, and he smiled brilliantly. "Gleenhouse!" he fairly shouted. "We have glenhouse."

"A greenhouse," Miss Trask murmured. Of course! She had heard of the houses that were built of glass and kept in the heat from the sun, warming the interior to such an extent that summer vegetables could be grown in the winter. She also knew that in Europe, these contraptions only existed on the estates of the very wealthy. How had these Japanese gardeners brought them to Sleepyside?

Oto Hakaito was looking at her intently, Miss Trask realized. She opened her mouth to ask her next question, but the little Oriental man struck first.

"You wonder how glenhouse come here?" he asked, smiling knowingly. At Miss Trask's simple nod, he explained, "Blilliant man bring glenhouse to Japan at end of last century. Hakaito family farmers. Hakaito family see how house help them and use." Oto's face clouded, and Miss Trask realized that either Oto was truly depressed about what he was about to say or a very good actor. "Then things in Japan turn bad. Hakaitos not like what happen. Oto and Kasyo leave Japan. No like warlord emperor. Come to New York." At this, Oto's face cleared again, and Miss Trask was sure that she saw genuineness on the Oriental's face. "We use glenhouse to give good Sleepyside good fluits and vegetables. You like?"

Miss Trask saw such frank desire to please on Oto's face that she could not doubt his intentions any longer.

"I like, most assuredly," she said.

At that, the man beamed. He bowed slightly and then looked around. "You are Miss Trask, no?"

Miss Trask, although she realized that she should be surprised that this man knew her name, was not. "I am," she affirmed.

"Please thank Mr. Wheeler," Oto said. "He like businesses. He like business in his new town. Oto and Kasyo very happy that he give us money for business."

Miss Trask, though not surprised that Oto Hakaito knew her name, *was* surprised that Mr. Wheeler had given the Oriental money. Her brows shot up. "He gave you money?"

Oto bowed. "Yes, he call it some very American name. It big city name, the money."

Miss Trask thought for a moment. “Investment?” she said. “He invested in your store?”

Oto beamed. “Yes. That is word. Mr. Wheeler invest. He like flesh fluits and vegetables for his family.”

Miss Trask smiled, knowing that her job was surely over here. Not only did her gut tell her that the Hakaitos were not involved in the plot against Mr. Wheeler’s life, but she also knew that Mr. Wheeler would have investigated the hell out of anything in which he invested.

Miss Trask paused in her thoughts for a moment, and her cheeks suddenly flushed a very becoming pink. She just realized that her old life had quite caught up with her—since when had she used a curse word, even in her thoughts? Yes, her old life had most definitely caught up with her.

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It was this realization that further confirmed Miss Trask’s belief that she was not rusty. Feeling rather buoyed, she decided to continue her investigations of Mr. Bennington and Miss Jones after she put her bundle of fresh fruit and vegetables in the Wheelers’ Ford. Mr. Bennington was first on her list. His inability to answer the question about fluorescent and incandescent bulbs had aroused her suspicions. Miss Trask knew from small-town chatter that Mr. Bennington was a single man from Britain, but something about his accent didn’t sound quite right. She had spent a fair amount of time in England, and her mind had stored away the cadences and quirks of the British accent.

*Something about Mr. Bennington’s cadence just doesn’t sound right, Agent 700 mused. Now, as fond as I am of the Scottish brogue, I don’t think that I would know a fake from the real thing, but I’d stake my reputation that Mr. Bennington’s accent is phony as a three dollar bill.*

As she strode down Main Street, Miss Trask realized that there was something else off about the so-called electrician. *What was it?* she thought. In her mind, she retraced her encounter with the shop owner right up to the point at which he had changed the sign in the window.

*That’s it!* she thought excitedly as a light bulb went off in her head. He had an indent on the ring finger of his right hand, much like a man who had recently taken off a long-worn wedding band, but a British gentleman would have worn a wedding band on his *left* ring finger.

*True, Miss Trask conceded to herself, he could have been wearing a ring that was not a wedding band, but really, what British man wears a ring on his ring finger?* It was British custom for men to wear their signet rings on their left pinky finger, and even then that was more of an aristocratic tradition. She thought of the Duke of Windsor, who wore his family crest on a pinky ring, and she unconsciously compared Mr. Bennington to the famous former King of the United Kingdom, who had so romantically abdicated the throne for American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Whatever Mr. Bennington was, Miss Trask was certain he was *not* an aristocrat, and she was almost positive that he was not a Brit, either.

*So, if he's not British, what is he?* Miss Trask was nearing the electrician's shop, so she paused on the sidewalk and pretended to examine her list, which she knew other people would take for a shopping list, while she pondered this question.

Germans, Norwegians, Russians, Poles, some Belgians, and Dutch Catholics wore their wedding bands on their right hands, but Mr. Bennington didn't look like he hailed from any of these countries. Those from Greece or Spain also wore their wedding bands on their right hands. Miss Trask thought about his slicked back, dark hair. *Yes, she decided, he could be Greek or Spanish.*

The Greeks were fighting alongside the Allies, but the Spanish, although they had declared themselves "non-belligerent" and recently upgraded their status to "strict neutrality", had given the Axis Powers considerable sympathy, as well as extensive material, economic, and military support. Spanish agents were also committing many acts of anti-British sabotage. If Mr. Bennington was the spy, he was likely to be Spanish rather than Greek.

An idea on how to prove this began to form in the agent's mind, and she tucked her list in her tweed bag and proceeded down the street to the small shop. She discreetly peered through the window and saw that the object of her suspicion was stocking a shelf, his back to her. The "Closed" sign was still in the window, but Miss Trask was willing to bet that the door was still unlocked. She moved to the door and quietly checked the knob, pleased when it turned easily under her grasp.

Mr. Bennington still had his back to her and seemed rather absorbed in his task, which was perfect for Miss Trask's plan.

Agent 700 stealthily opened the door and entered the shop. The element of surprise was necessary for her plan. She gently closed the door behind her and then said loudly, "*Necesito a un electricista. ¿Puede usted ayudarme?*"

As Miss Trask had counted on, the man instinctively answered in his native tongue. "*Sí, soy electricista. ¿Cómo puedo ayudarle?*" he said as he turned around. Then, as he simultaneously realized what he had done and saw Miss Trask standing before him, his face turned ashen.

Miss Trask smiled triumphantly. *Rusty, my arse*, she thought briefly as she said coldly, "Just as I suspected. You're no more a British electrician than I am! Your spying days are over, *Señor.*"

"Spy?" Mr. Bennington managed to squeak out. In his nervousness, he had dropped his British accent, and his words were Spanish tinged. "I am no spy, madam!"

"A likely story!" Miss Trask returned. "Why else would a Spaniard set himself up in Sleepside pretending to be British?"

The man stared at her stonily, refusing to offer an explanation. Miss Trask took this as an admission of guilt. She nimbly extracted a pair of handcuffs from her tweed bag and took her suspect into custody. He offered no resistance as she placed the cuffs on his wrists behind his back. She moved to a spot from which she could watch her suspect from behind while being out of his sight and hearing range. She withdrew her pen from her breast pocket and aligned the cap with her engraved initials.

“Open channel D,” she whispered into her pen. Within a few moments, she heard a voice say, “Hunt.”

“Red,” she replied.

“October. Have you made progress Agent 700?”

“I believe I have,” she said in a soft voice. “I have a suspect in custody. He recently moved to Sleepyside and set himself up as a British electrician. He is neither British nor an electrician. He is a Spaniard.”

“Good work, Agent 700. I will dispatch a member of the United Network Command for Law Enforcement to take him into custody and interrogate him. I ask, though, that you continue your investigation while we determine whether this is the spy we seek. Our intelligence has indicated that the spy is a member of an Axis country. Although Spain sympathizes with the Axis governments, it is not an Axis country.”

“Yes, sir,” Miss Trask said, and the line was disconnected. True to the other agent’s word, a man from U.N.C.L.E. arrived within 15 minutes to take “Mr. Bennington” into custody.

The nondescript man looked at Miss Trask and said simply, “Napoleon.”

“Solo,” she responded. At this, the man nodded slightly and reached for the arm of the dejected-looking prisoner who stood silently in the middle of the store. He offered no protest as he was led away into official custody.

Miss Trask only allowed herself a moment of pride before she turned back to the task at hand. She had promised to continue her search for the spy, in case intelligence determined that the Spaniard was not the agent for whom she was looking. Seeing that she had already basically dismissed Miss Jones as a suspect, she decided to confirm her gut feeling and eliminate her as a suspect once and for all.

She noted the time on her wristwatch and realized that the junior-senior high school would be empty. It was just after four o’clock, and even the skeleton administrative staff that remained at the school during the break would be gone. Before she completely cleared Miss Jones, she wanted to take a look at her personnel file.

Twenty minutes later, Miss Trask was quietly looking through the file cabinet in the main office of Sleepyside Junior-Senior High. She had been gratified to discover that her lock-picking skills had not faded during the years she had been on inactive status. She easily found the drawer devoted to faculty and staff files and pulled Miss Jones’ record from among the others. A quick perusal found that she had been born and raised on Long Island. She attended Farmingdale High School and had graduated two years ago from Hofstra College with a degree in psychology and a minor in French. Following her graduation, she had completed her year-long, supervised guidance counselor internship in the high school in Syosset, on Long Island.

Miss Trask glanced at the clock. It was not yet five o’clock, and there was a chance that someone might be in the office at Hofstra College and the high schools if the schools were not on

their spring vacation. She noted the number in the file for the Hofstra College administrative office and quickly dialed. She was gratified when her call was answered.

“Hofstra College administration,” a female voice intoned in a thick New York accent. “How may I help you?”

“Hello, this is Regina Phalange from the Sleepyside School District,” Miss Trask said, adopting a thick New York accent to match the secretary’s. “I am calling to confirm that a Miss Mary Jones received a degree in psychology in May of 1942.”

“One moment, please,” the voice on the other line said. Several minutes later, the secretary returned to the line and said, “Yes, according to our files, a Miss Mary Jones attended our college from September 1938 until her graduation in May 1942 with a degree in psychology and a minor in French.”

“Thank you very much,” Miss Trask said before disconnecting the line. Her calls to the two high schools also yielded success. Secretaries answered the phone in both offices and confirmed that Miss Mary Jones had been associated with the schools.

The secretary at Farmingdale High School had even exclaimed, “Mary Jones! Why, Miss Phalange, I don’t even need to look up our records. Mary Jones was a lovely student, and very interested in education. It was actually I who convinced her to get her degree and become a school guidance counselor instead of becoming a school secretary. She wanted to work with students, but she said she didn’t want to be a teacher, so she was planning on becoming an office worker in a school. I could see the talent she had in developing relationships with others and guiding them, so I knew her talents would be wasted as a mere office worker. A guidance counselor seemed just the right career for her.”

Miss Trask smiled, convinced that Miss Jones was indeed who she said she was, but the agent decided to obtain one last confirmation. “Yes, Miss Jones does appear to be a talented counselor, and she is also a very lovely woman. Why, with her long, dark hair, blue eyes, and pixie features, I bet she even could have been a model!”

The woman on the other end of the line chuckled. “People were always telling her that, but she insisted that she didn’t want to model. She wanted to help others.”

“How noble,” Miss Trask murmured. “Well, thank you so very much for your time.”

After she disconnected the phone, Miss Trask was quite convinced that Miss Jones was not being impersonated by someone else, nor was she a spy. As long as she was near the elementary school, Miss Trask decided to investigate Miss Elliman, but before she could get very far in that direction, her shoe phone rang.

She hurriedly answered it, not wanting the ringing to draw the attention of the janitorial staff.

“Agent 700.”

“Agent, good job in capturing in capturing Fernando Sanchez, alias Mr. Bennington. He broke quickly during our interrogation, and our subsequent investigation confirmed that he is the

deadbeat father of twelve children. He decided to move to the United States from Spain and invent a new identity so that he could shirk his financial and other responsibilities as a father and husband. His shop will be sold, and the proceeds will go to the care of his wife and children. Unfortunately, this means that your job is not done, and the spy is still at large. Have you made any progress?"

"I have eliminated four possible suspects, and I was just about to check out another suspect," Agent 700 replied.

"Good, but before you do, you need to rendezvous with Agent 86. He has intelligence that he has indicated it would be best to share directly with you instead of going through channels."

Miss Trask was impressed. The intel must have been quite valuable if a rendezvous was needed.

"Absolutely," she said. "Where and when?"

"Agent 86 will be contacting you with that information." With that, the communication was terminated.

Miss Trask drove back to the Manor House, satisfied with her morning's work. She wasn't sure when Agent 86 would be contacting her, but she certainly wasn't going to sit around twiddling her thumbs waiting on him. She decided she would take her produce purchases to Cook and then perhaps pay a visit to Edwin Maypenny to pick his brain about Sleepyside's newer residents.

She parked her car by the Manor House's rear entrance near the kitchen and had just opened the back door of the sedan to retrieve her groceries, when she heard a ringing coming from her sensible oxfords.

"I don't know who thought it would be a smart idea to put a phone in a shoe, but I'd certainly like to have a whack at him," Agent 700 grumbled as she took a quick glance around to ensure her privacy and then sat in the backseat of the car and removed her shoe phone. "This is Agent seven-double-oh."

"Meet me in the stable behind the Wheelers' Manor House estate."

One gray eyebrow rose up cautiously. "Pardon me?" She had settled back rather easily into the routine procedures of her old career, and this familiar voice—Agent 86, she was certain—giving orders without verifying identity, and using a line normally reserved for those working out of the Agency's home base, aroused her suspicion.

"Er...would you believe...Clear?"

"Present," she responded briskly.

"Danger. Agent 700, your presence is required in the Wheeler stable immediately."

A slight twinge of alarm swept through her brain as she replaced her shoe and strode quickly to the stable just up the hill from where she had parked. If Agent 86 was neglecting proper protocol

and arranging a meeting this quickly, he must need her to immediately follow up on the intelligence he had gathered.

She paused for a moment as she entered the stable to allow her eyes to adjust to the dimmer light. The horses whinnied a welcome, and she absently patted Susie on her velvety nose as she passed the black mare's stall.

"That'll be far enough, Agent 700."

He kept his voice low, but she was certain it was indeed Agent 86. He stood in the shadows of an empty stall near the end of the stable. She could see that he wore a long, double-breasted trench coat belted snugly around his waist and a weathered gray fedora that was slung low, nearly obscuring his facial features. Humphrey Bogart may have made the trench coat famous last year in the Oscar-winning film *Casablanca*, but military officers and international spies had been using them for several decades now. Miss Trask had to admit it gave Agent 86 a rather dashing mysterious air.

"How did you get here so quickly?" he asked.

She glanced over her shoulder and mentally calculated the distance from her car to the stable. She gazed down at her always-trim appearance and decided she didn't look ruffled, as if she had run all the way to the stable.

"I was nearby," she answered. Trying to contain a sly smile, she added, "Did you assume I was still in the village? I would have thought you'd be tracking my every move. I hope you're not getting...rusty."

Ignoring her flip comment, he continued, "We've received some vital intel that the assassin we seek is located right here on Glen Road."

Her thoughts rushed immediately to the Wheeler household. If her employer's assassin had been right under her nose all this time and she hadn't had even a hint of suspicion, she'd never forgive herself. She'd most certainly never live down the "rusty" comment she had just made to a more highly ranked agent. Her momentary guilt must have shown, because Agent 86 hurried to erase her doubts.

"The spy, or spies, we seek are sending communications to a contact known to be sympathetic to the Axis Powers. The Agency has intercepted a short-wave radio message sent over a military frequency and has traced these signals to the Lynch estate."

"Surely you don't suspect Edward Lynch?" Miss Trask asked in a shocked tone.

"At this time, we believe it is someone under his employ. We cannot rule out the possibility, however, of someone coming onto their property and transmitting the messages, and we shouldn't rule out the Lynches, either. After all, Mr. Lynch did become wealthy rather quickly, through methods that have not been made clear to any of his neighbors."

She furrowed her brow in thought. Agent 86 could be right. Even though the Belden children had known Diana Lynch for many years, the adults hadn't even been on a first-name basis until

very recently. The Lynches tended to keep to themselves, she reflected. In fact, even though Bobby often had Larry and Terry Lynch over at Crabapple Farm, and by extension, the Wheeler estate, she couldn't now recall what the twin girls' names were. Trying to push the unimportant riddle aside for the moment, she listened attentively as Agent 86 continued.

"You'll find the transcript of the message we intercepted in the Wheeler library. Look in Miss Wheeler's Lucy Radcliffe collection, the book *Gamble in Glasgow*, page 47."

*What are those girls' names?* For some reason, she couldn't banish the nagging question from her mind. It didn't even occur to her to ask how Agent 86 had gotten into the Wheelers' home, how he knew the Lucy Radcliffe collection belonged to Honey, or even why he had chosen that particular book in which to hide the report.

"Agent 700, are you listening to me?" Agent 86 hissed.

He was looking not at her, but past her, and when she glanced over her shoulder, she too saw the Wheelers' redheaded groom, Bill Regan, coming up the hill with little Bobby Belden close on his heels.

"Yes," she replied quickly. "Library, Radcliffe, page 47. What do you need me to do?"

"Find some excuse to visit the Lynch estate. Our three primary suspects are the chauffeur and mechanic, John Steed; the cook, Milo Rambaldi; and the maid, Helga Bruger. See what you can find out about all three of them and I'll be in touch later this evening."

Bobby Belden yelled out, "Hey, Miss Trask! Watcha doin'?"

She turned toward the new arrivals with a kindly smile on her face and waved, then took a furtive glance behind her. Agent 86 had vanished.

"Miss Trask! Miss Trask! Look what I got in the mail!" The harum-scarum little boy ran toward her with his prizes clutched joyfully in his small hand.

"Did you get a postcard from your brothers and sister?" she guessed.

"Yep. *And* I got one from Miss Elephant, too!"

Miss Elliman. Agent 700 had almost forgotten about investigating Sleepyside's new first grade teacher. With the new information regarding the transmission from the Lynch estate, Miss Patricia Elliman should have been effectively eliminated from consideration as a suspect. Still, Agent 86 had said not to eliminate anyone just yet, and Miss Elliman's cozy cottage bordered on the edge of the Lynch property.

"Where is Miss Elliman?" she asked Bobby, trying to sound polite rather than overly curious.

Bobby studied one of his postcards carefully, looking for words he could read without help. Finally, he replied, "Florida. She and her sister are going to bring back oranges for our whole class."

“May I see your postcard, Bobby? I promise I’ll give it back.”

Reluctantly, he handed it over and Miss Trask studied the handwriting, the message, and the postmark. From all appearances, Miss Elliman was simply on spring break like the rest of her students. She could be confidently eliminated as a suspect...unless this had been sent by someone else as a red herring. Miss Trask made a mental note to investigate this angle if and when the Lynch household should be cleared.

“Thank you, Bobby,” she said as she returned his postcard to him. “You’re a very lucky boy to get two postcards in one day.”

She was rewarded with a brilliant smile from the endearing child. Turning to the man who was just as handsome, much older, and yet still too young for her, she thought with an inward grimace, she asked, “What are you two gentlemen up to this afternoon?”

“I promised young Master Belden a riding lesson today,” Regan replied amiably. “But as we came up from the house, I noticed you had several bags of groceries in your car. Would you like us to ‘help’ you unload them?”

Thinking quickly, Miss Trask replied, “No, thank you. Only some of those bags are for Cook. Mrs. Wheeler suggested I give a thank you gift to the Lynches’ cook for that lovely authentic Italian dinner he treated the family to last month. When I saw how fresh and bountiful the Hakaito brothers’ produce was, I thought it would be a most appropriate show of our gratitude.”

She said good-bye to Regan and Bobby and made her way back to her car, pleased with herself for coming up with a plausible excuse for visiting the Lynch estate and talking to the staff. She could feel a tingle of anticipation radiating through her body right down to her toes, a sensation she hadn’t felt in many years. She was about to uncover an assassin, save Matthew Wheeler’s life, and maybe even do her part toward the war effort.

Rather than risk her story being called into question, Miss Trask hastily grabbed a few bags of produce and took them into the Wheeler kitchen. After exchanging pleasantries with the latest cook, and retrieving the transcript of the intercepted message in Honey’s Lucy book, she returned to her car. Although it was geographically closer to walk to the Lynch estate, which was southwest of Manor House, she had no desire to do so while encumbered by shopping bags, no matter how comfortably sensible her shoes might be.

A short while later, she was pulling up the long, circular drive and parking behind Mrs. Lynch’s snazzy new convertible. *Yes...how did Mr. Lynch make all of that money?* Miss Trask thought to herself as she approached the front door. She casually reached into the jacket pocket of her sensible, tweed suit and felt the reassuring feel of her trusty Swiss Army knife and small roll of duct tape. One never knew when these items would come in handy—it was simply amazing the number of escape devices and weapons that could be manufactured out of them.

Before she could ring the bell, the door was opened by the Lynches’ prim and proper butler, Harrison, whose eyebrows rose ever so slightly as he observed the bags that Miss Trask carried. “Good day, Miss Trask. We weren’t expecting you.” As always, he was impeccably dressed in a dark suit, his shoes buffed to a flawless shine.

*Hmm...must have heard my car. Nothing slips by Harrison.* Miss Trask gave him a warm smile. “No, that you weren’t. I’m dreadfully sorry to impose, but I wanted to give this produce to Mr. Rambaldi to thank him for the lovely dinner he prepared for the Wheelers last month.”

Harrison stood back and gave a slight bow, which Miss Trask took as an invitation to enter.

“May I take one of your bags?” he enquired.

Miss Trask handed one over.

“I’m afraid Mr. Rambaldi isn’t here at the moment. He’s taken the day off.”

*Interesting timing,* Miss Trask thought. She followed Harrison into the kitchen. “I certainly hope everything is all right,” she commented, placing her bag on the spotless countertop.

“Personal business,” Harrison said, with a slight sniff as he set his bag next to Miss Trask’s.

*Very interesting, indeed.* “Mr. Harrison, I wonder if I might trouble you with a request.”

Harrison gave a stiff little bow. “How may I be of assistance?”

Miss Trask was careful to keep her always well-modulated voice casual. “I’d like to speak to the Lynches’ cleaning woman. Mrs. Bruger? I’m afraid we’re having an issue over at the Manor House, and I could really use her input.”

“Certainly. She is upstairs, cleaning the bedrooms. I’ll call her.”

Miss Trask thought quickly. “Oh, no—I wouldn’t dream of interrupting her work as I’m afraid I’ve already disrupted yours. If you don’t mind, I’ll just pop upstairs. I won’t be but a minute.”

Like Harrison, Miss Trask was impeccably dressed. Her crisp, short gray hair was neatly styled, her tweed suit carried neither a wrinkle nor a spot, and her sensible oxfords were neat as pins. It didn’t occur to Harrison, or indeed to most people, that she was much more than what she appeared—a pleasant, middle-aged woman who couldn’t possibly have a hidden agenda.

“Very well.”

A moment later, Miss Trask quietly headed upstairs. She could hear the sound of a carpet sweeper moving back and forth and also the faint sound of big band music coming from somewhere, although it sounded strangely muffled and distorted. Then it stopped.

She paused outside of a large, frilly bedroom lavishly decorated in Mrs. Lynch’s favorite color scheme, royal blue and gold, and she saw the object of her search, Mrs. Bruger. She was a rather large woman with colorless hair scraped back into a bun and pale, blue eyes. She wore no makeup of any kind, and her face had a certain hard ruddiness that spoke of time spent outdoors and of hard work.

Mrs. Bruger picked up the carpet sweeper and, turning, saw Miss Trask. “Oh!” she said, clearly surprised.

Miss Trask smiled warmly. “How do you do, Mrs. Bruger?”

Mrs. Bruger gave a small nod. “Fine, thank you.”

“Do you mind if I ask you a few questions?”

“I am really very busy,” she replied.

Miss Trask gave her best smile. “It will only take a moment.” When the cleaning woman gave another small nod, Miss Trask asked her about getting rid of stains. She knew from previous conversations with Mrs. Lynch that Mrs. Bruger took particular pride in her ability to get rid of the most impossible messes, and sure enough, the younger woman visibly relaxed and talked animatedly for a few minutes.

When she had finished, Miss Trask schooled her face into a grateful expression. “I was beside myself wondering how I was going to take care of this matter before Mrs. Wheeler returned, and now I feel confident that I will. Thank you so very much, Mrs. Bruger. Or I should probably say *‘danke schön’*, yes?”

“*Bitte*,” Mrs. Bruger replied.

Miss Trask regarded her for a moment. “How long have you been in our country, Mrs. Bruger?”

A closed look washed over Mrs. Bruger’s face. “I...about a year, I think.”

Miss Trask nodded pleasantly. “Wonderful. And how did you come to be in Sleepyside?”

When Mrs. Bruger didn’t reply, Miss Trask prompted, “You were perhaps placed by an agency?”

Mrs. Bruger nodded. “Yes. That is so.”

Miss Trask felt a buzz fill her. “I see.” She tilted her head slightly as she again heard the faint sound of music. “You like the sound of the American big bands?” She noted coolly that Mrs. Bruger appeared to grow a little pale. “You know, Mrs. Lynch told me the most interesting story once. About how, one day, a German woman with a sad story to tell about trying to make a new life for herself just showed up on her doorstep one day. How she believes in second chances and so hired this woman, in spite of her not being able to offer any references. Funny—she didn’t mention anything about an agency.”

She followed Mrs. Bruger’s involuntary glance down the hallway towards what appeared to be a closet door, and then, quick as lightning, took the carpet sweeper from the startled woman and strode briskly toward the closet. “Here. Let me put this away for you.”

“No!” Mrs. Bruger lunged, but Miss Trask was quicker. She jerked open the door and the music, although tinny, was clear. And then there was the voice of the radio announcer—a voice Miss Trask recognized.

*Hello, fellas! Hello, you men from a country where selfishness and greed on the part of many exist at the expense of the injury, suffering, and death of the boys on the fighting line. And now for some real live music played by Bruno and his Swinging Tigers!*

“Interesting that you’d be listening to ‘Home Sweet Home.’ I wonder how long Axis Sally is going to keep getting away with these broadcasts before being called out as the traitor she is.”

Mrs. Bruger stood, panting slightly as she stared with hatred at Miss Trask. “I think you should leave. These are my cleaning supplies, and I have to finish my work. You have no business here. I have answered your question. Now, go.”

Miss Trask’s sharp blue eyes swept through the closet, but other than cleaning supplies, odds and ends, and an old suitcase, there wasn’t much to be seen. Then she remembered one of the reports she had read recently on clandestine radio equipment. Being inactive was no excuse not to keep up with one’s research, after all. She reached for the suitcase.

“You’ve no right...that’s mine!” Mrs. Bruger shouted, making a grab for it.

Miss Trask pivoted and grabbed Mrs. Bruger’s wrist with her other hand, giving it a twist that had the cleaning woman sinking to her knees.

Miss Trask snapped open the suitcase and couldn’t help smirking. “Well, well. An SSTR-1 set. I’ve only ever seen a picture of one of these. Interesting that you would have one of these, don’t you think?”

The SSTR-1 was a portable high frequency receiver, transmitter, and power supply combined to fit neatly inside the case and was ideal for both receiving, and transmitting, radio waves. And at the moment, it was receiving a rather popular radio show that was typically broadcast to military bases.

Mrs. Bruger rubbed her wrist. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’ve never seen this in my life.”

“Didn’t you just say it was yours?”

“I was merely trying to stop you from touching my employer’s belongings. You’ve got no right to...”

Miss Trask had had enough of this nonsense. “I have every right to.” She whipped out her trusty roll of duct tape.

Mrs. Bruger’s eyes bulged at the sight, and before Miss Trask could move a muscle, Mrs. Bruger had whipped out a small, hand-held transmitter and rapidly pushed a series of buttons.

“You fool!” Miss Trask shouted, diving towards the woman who she now knew for certain was her spy. She knocked the other woman backwards, and as they both rolled down the gold-carpeted stairs, the hidden explosive in the SSTR-1’s receiver detonated above them with a deadly sounding bang.

The two women landed with a dull thud on the thickly carpeted landing off of the formal entry hall. Miss Trask felt slightly bruised from the fall, but at least she had avoided hitting her head. More importantly, she had avoided being in the blast path from the bomb that this villainous Nazi had detonated.

Before either woman had a chance to speak or move, the front door burst open, and the shadowy figure in the trench coat and fedora entered. With a lightning smooth move, he unsheathed the sword concealed within his whangee-handled umbrella as he hurried over to where Agent 700 and her captive lay sprawled on the floor. Harrison entered the entry hall just behind Agent 86 and gasped at the sight before him.

“What on earth...” he began, but Agent 86 held up a warning hand, and the prim and proper butler was silenced.

Miss Trask stood and roughly pulled the stony-faced cleaning woman up with her. “Helga Bruger, German spy,” she informed her fellow agent curtly as she forcefully turned the woman around and satisfactorily duct taped the spy’s hands together behind her back.

“Duct tape?” Agent 86 asked, his face still hidden under his fedora.

“My handcuffs accompanied Fernando Sanchez and were never returned. Besides, you’d be amazed at what you can do with a little duct tape and a Swiss Army knife,” Miss Trask stated calmly as she finished securing her prisoner.

Agent 86 nodded and sheathed his sword. He turned to Harrison and said, “Your country would be indebted to you if you would keep this incident to yourself. Loose lips sink ships.”

Harrison gave a nod. “Of course. You have my word, sir,” he promised as he discreetly left the room.

Agent 86 and Miss Trask led Helga Bruger outside. The male agent gave a signal, and two muscular men appeared from nowhere.

“Take the Kraut to headquarters, and please get an Agency carpenter here to fix the area where the bomb detonated. It needs to be completed before the family returns,” Agent 86 ordered the two men. They each gave a curt nod and led Mrs. Bruger away.

A furious Helga Bruger turned and screamed, “*Können Sie in der Hölle ewig schmoren!*”

“Charming lady,” Agent 86 commented as he turned toward Agent 700 and charmingly tipped his fedora up, revealing his face.

Miss Trask gasped. “Andrew Belden!”

The other agent paled. “You know me?”

“I’ve seen your picture at Crabapple Farm,” Miss Trask explained. “I thought that you were in Scotland!”

Andrew Belden, aka Agent 86, smiled. “That was my cover. It explained why I couldn’t accompany the kids to Happy Valley Farm. I needed to get Trixie, her brothers, and their friends out of the area while this went down. There was considerable worry within the Agency that my intrepid niece would find herself involved in this...situation.”

Miss Trask smiled. “I myself was thinking how lucky it was that they were away when I received my initial directive. That also explains how a sheep farmer could fly six young adults at the last minute to Des Moines.”

Andy chuckled. “It was Uncle Sam who sent them, not Uncle Andrew,” he admitted as he paused a moment to look at her. “And you are the wonderful Miss Trask I have heard so much about from my niece and nephews.”

Miss Trask blushed. “I don’t know how wonderful I am, but I *am* Miss Trask.”

The two began to stroll toward the car Miss Trask had driven over from the Manor House.

“I’m sorry that I didn’t get to meet you while the kids took me on a tour of Matthew Wheeler’s property,” he said.

“I’m sorry, too,” Miss Trask returned, “but I am so glad we’ve gotten the chance to meet now. Are you leaving immediately now that the case is solved?”

“Eventually, but I definitely have time to have a celebratory drink with my fellow agent. Would you care to join me for a milkshake at Wimpy’s, Agent 700?”

“I would, Agent 86,” Miss Trask said with a smile.

Later that evening, Miss Trask sat back in her favorite chair in the Wheeler library. Not only had the Bob-Whites mailed Bobby a postcard, they had thoughtfully sent one to Miss Trask, too, and she read it as she leaned back into the comfortable cushion of the chair and placed her feet up on the matching ottoman. The governess chuckled aloud at the comment that the Bob-Whites hoped that she wasn’t too bored with how quiet things in Sleepyside must be without them.

“Quiet, indeed,” Miss Trask murmured as she took a sip from her martini—stirred, not shaken.

### **Epilogue**

Miss Trask settled down into the cozy chair in the blessed silence of the Wheeler library, thinking how wonderful it was that she was *finally* going to be able to read *Anna and the King of Siam*. Her young charges and their friends had been invited to spend a week at Uncle Andrew’s hunting lodge in the Ozarks, and *this* time Uncle Andrew was with them.

Suddenly, a jingling sound from her shoe broke the silence.

Miss Trask sighed. *Missed it by that much.*

## **Authors' Notes**

### ***From all of us***

*We managed to work in twenty-four references to fictional spies—can you find them? Use our answer key (found at the end of the authors' notes) to check! Bonus points if you spot the real spy and the Friends reference!*

### ***Bonnie's***

*It was such an honor and a privilege, as well as a total riot, writing this story with Mary and Dana—even if Dana had to drag me into the group kicking and screaming. (grin) Okay, not really, but I freely admit I had some reservations about writing about any of the canon adults, as I just don't feel I have much of a grasp on them. But Mary's initial PM (which may or may not have been a joke \*g\*) was all it took to get me fully enthused about this group story!*

*As Dana says below, the chat was fun, the writing was fun, the reading was fun, the editing was fun. I laughed every time I talked to one or both of these ladies or read their work. I learned several interesting tidbits about the time period, I learned about Dana's issues with semicolons, and I learned what the flag of India looks like. All in all, a fabulous experience! Thanks for a great time, my friends!*

*I have no specific notes about my sections, other than to say that I had to put the Casablanca reference in, as it's one of my all-time favorite movies. However, I was never before happy that Dan didn't get to go to Iowa. I enjoyed making sure he made an appearance in the story and then Mary almost made me pee my pants with her Mafioso line! LOL!*

*Bonnie's word count: 2,940*

### ***Dana's***

*Many thanks to my awesome partners in crime, Bonnie and Mary, who made this a JOY to write! The plotting chat was hysterical, the writing was hysterical, the emails were hysterical, the edits were hysterical...it was just so much fun!*

*For those who might question whether the term "deadbeat" was used in the 1940s, according to <http://www.randomhouse.com/wotd/index.pperl?date=20000831>, the term originated during the American Civil War.*

*Ever wondered what a whangee handle is? So did the three of us! But according to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whangee>, The Avengers' John Steed carried such an umbrella—it basically means "bamboo".*

*I am no Miss Trask when it comes to Spanish, so the Spanish translations are thanks to BabelFish. If you speak Spanish fluently, and the translation isn't quite right, by all means, let me know!*

*Mrs. Bruger sincerely wishes that Agents 86 and 700 would scorch eternally in hell. She is a charming woman, isn't she? (Many thanks to Mary for her idea to have Mrs. Bruger say that!)*

*Oh, and just for the record, my only issues with semi-colons are in fiction. \*g\* And, no, I don't know why, as I my science writing is littered with them!*

*Dana's word count: 5,460*

### ***Mary's***

*First, I was going to thank my partners in crime, but Dana already did that. Then, I was going to say that it was an honor and a privilege to write with Dana and Bonnie, but Bonnie already said that. And then it occurred to me how lucky I was to team up with two people who seem to think along the same lines as I do! \*g\* Thank you for such a fun, rewarding, and wonderful experience, you guys!*

*We had a terrific time plotting and discussing this sucker, too. Did you know that the Jix chatroom has all kinds of funky emoticons?*

*The information on fluorescent light bulbs can be found here:  
[http://americanhistory.si.edu/lightproject/commercial/com\\_c.htm](http://americanhistory.si.edu/lightproject/commercial/com_c.htm)*

*“Bonjour, Je suis un voleur, et Je suis ici à pour voler votre cœur.” = “Hello, I'm a thief, and I'm here to steal your heart.”*

*“Bonjour. Avez-vous dix-huit ans?” = “Hello. Are you eighteen?”*

*The quote from the radio show ‘Home Sweet Home’ was found by listening to this actual sound bite provided of the show, found here: <http://ppages.bfree.on.ca/rdrake/wwii/index.htm> and was used without permission. The information about Axis Sally and about the SSTR-1 was found here: <http://www.militaryradio.com/spyradio/>*

*Mary's word count: 2,413*

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### *Fictional Spy References*

1. Title (Play on “Bond. James Bond.”)
2. Shoe phone (*Get Smart*)
3. Agent seven-double-oh (reverse of James Bond’s agent number)
4. Miss Trask’s description as a young girl (Lucy Radcliffe’s description as read by Trixie in *The Mystery of the Ghostly Galleon*)
5. *Adventure in Paris* and *Mission in Munich* (Lucy Radcliffe titles from canon)
6. “Your mission, should you choose to accept it...” in Miss Trask’s boathouse message (*Mission Impossible*)
7. “This message will self destruct.” followed by self-destructing message (*Mission Impossible*)
8. Open Channel D (*The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*)
9. Pen used as a radio device (*The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*)
10. Identity, Supremacy, Ultimatum used as code words (The Jason Bourne series by Robert Ludlum)
11. Agent 86 (*Get Smart*)
12. Jack Bauer (*24*)
13. *Hunt (for) Red October* used as code words (Jack Ryan novel/movie by Tom Clancy)
14. United Network Command for Law Enforcement (*The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*)
15. “Would you believe...?” (*Get Smart*)
16. *Clear (and) Present Danger* used as code words (Jack Ryan novel/movie by Tom Clancy)
17. Mention of Honey’s Lucy Radcliffe books, including made-up title *Gamble in Glasgow*
18. Page 47 (*Alias*)
19. John Steed, the Lynches’ mechanic (*The Avengers*)
20. Milo Rambaldi, the Lynches’ cook (*Alias*)
21. Swiss Army knife and small role of duct tape (*MacGyver*)
22. Sword within a whangee-handled umbrella (*The Avengers*)
23. A martini, stirred not shaken (the reverse of James Bond’s preference)
24. “Missed it by *that* much.” (*Get Smart*)

Real spy: Mata Hari

*Friends* reference: Regina Phalange (the name Phoebe always takes when she needs an alias)