

Flamenco blared—and a pistol shot went unheard

safe," said Callan. "Open it up. It'll be a bit of practice for you."

The safe, a combination job, was behind the Turner water-colour, and Loney twisted busily, aware as he was of the telephone numbers thought Callan, as he carried on with his reading. The filing cabinets were filled with evidence that Keith was to be sent more. But Loney went on twirling and found the right combination at last, and Callan wandered over to see what he'd found.

KEITH'S interest in whisky was more than just a national pride, it seemed. He owned a third of a distillery and there were the sure certificates to prove it, which explained why he was rich. . . . And that was about all that there was—except the scrapbook.

Keith, it seemed, was fascinated by Keith. The book was crammed with clippings, cuttings, photographs. All about Keith. And going back in time from the present to his childhood—the first was one of Keith in his crum. . . . Callan flicked through impatiently—so impatiently that he very nearly missed the only one worth having. . . . It was a menu from some long-forgotten dinner, and it was too thick. He took a knife from his pocket and prised carefully, while Loney went back to the snuff-boxes. Behind the menu was a photograph. A young man, tall, athletic, on horseback, riding across a landscape that was not English. . . . Loney watched moodily as Callan produced a camera, and photographed a photograph. Barny. The job was barny. Callan replaced the menu, put the scrapbook back in the safe, locked it and replaced the Turner water-colour.

Want to take a look upstairs? said Loney. "Yes," said Callan. "I do. As soon as you've put that snuff-box back. . . . Miss Lomax slept there too, it seemed, but by the look of it chastely enough. . . . She had a lot of books, and she read a lot of books, and in one of them she had hidden a photograph—or used it as a bookmark. A young man, tall, athletic, on horseback, riding across a landscape that was not English. . . . On it too was written: 'With all my love.' But that was not in English either. . . . Callan photographed the one, too, and it was time to go.

MERES enjoyed the flight to Malaga. Their hostess was pretty and served the kind of Scotch he preferred. Besides, there was the prospect of Spanish food—and of action. If he was sent as back-up man for Callan there had to be the chance of action. . . . They arrived on time, and a hired Ford was waiting for them, and in its glove compartment two St. Magnums. Action. . . . They drove to Cordoba, skirting Cadix, then leaving the sea, past orange groves and vineyards to where the high Sierras provided the frame for Keith's city in decay. . . . That it was beautiful, they had no doubt, but they had not come for beauty. The mosque with a cathedral inside it, the great houses with their walled gardens for these there was no time. They were hunters in pursuit of the ultimate prey, and for them beauty was meaningless. . . . They went to keep

their rendezvous with Keith. . . . Like two leopards, thought Callan, relying on a facade.

But Keith and Miss Lomax, it seemed, were dining with some geezer from Spanish television, and so they could do nothing but wait. So they ate chiqueques and Callos a la Madrileña, drank Rioja wine, and went back to their rooms. Waiting was something they knew all about, all you could do was endure it.

Meres went into his room and ducked without knowing why. All he knew was that there was danger. So he ducked and threw up his arm, and the knife sliced open the sleeve of the best light-weight jacket he'd ever owned.

Its owner struck again and Meres swerved, the knife slammed into the door. Meres dashed out then, but his attacker was already moving away with a dancer's grace, letting the knuckles of Meres's blow bring Meres close enough for the assailant to hit back, and his hand. It was over in seconds: when Callan came in Meres was on the floor and groaning. The only scars of his attacker's butcher's knife stuck in a door—and an open window.

Callan fetched water, but Meres took whisky. The violation of his jacket had upset him. He looked suspiciously at Callan. "You're trying not to laugh," he said. "What's so funny?"

"A tall feller," said Callan. "Athletic." Meres nodded. "He must have got our rooms mixed up," Callan said, and laughed aloud. "He was after me."

KEITH and Kirsty Lomax got back at 11.30, which made it an early dinner in Andalusia, and came at once to Callan's room. Callan and Meres waited.

The girl looked haggard, but Keith was bouncing with energy, content to endure pain, but Keith couldn't believe it, but in the end he believed the Magnum.

The house Callan broke into was old and cool, and apparently deserted except for a sleeping servant, but it had a garden that was mostly flowers, and in the courtyard Alfred Dawes sat reading by the light of an oil-lamp. It had to be Dawes, thought Callan, had to be the older version of the man whose picture he'd found in Keith's scrapbook, but his face was a monument to enduring pain. He looked eighty at least.

Dawes looked at the intruder without any visible sign of fear. The pain made fear of death irrelevant. He began to speak in Spanish.

Callan said, "I haven't come to steal, Mr. Dawes." The old man sighed to hear his real name mentioned. "British intelligence?" he asked, and Callan nodded. "I've been expecting you for twenty-seven years. You've come to take me back?"

"That's right."

"I have osteo-arthritis," Dawes said. "It's at the terminal stage. What's the point of putting me in a prison hospital?"

"What's the point of



DRAWINGS BY Robb

Callan and Meres burst into the hideout

betraying your country?" said Callan. "There were two actually," Dawes said at once. "The first was that I thought it right to do so."

"On indeed. My second point, I had just been told that I had this affliction. Suddenly I longed for sun. Light. I could no longer work, but I wanted my rest to be comfortable."

"There's no word about your illness in your file," said Callan. "How could there be? It was diagnosed in California just three weeks before I went back to England—and defected."

"You came straight here?" "Russia first," said Dawes. "I had so much to tell them that needed a lab."

"But they let you go?" "Quite happily," said Dawes. "Once the diagnosis was confirmed, I could no longer work, you see. So they arranged a cover-story for me—a new name, a new identity, and I came here—and was happy between bouts of pain."

"But why Spain?" "Can you think of a country less likely to harbour a Communist sympathiser? And I love this city." He talked of it then, rhapsodising as Keith had done, but with a real affection. On and on he talked, until Callan interrupted, and said, "I must warn you, Mr. Dawes, if anybody should come in on us—I'm armed."

The old man said, "No one will do so. Not tonight. You have my word." He laughed then, harshly. "If a traitor's word is acceptable. . . . Who betrayed me?"

"Alexander Keith," said Callan. "He saw you here when he was setting up a TV show."

"Poor old Sandy," said Dawes. "I loved him once, and he loved me—in so far as he was capable of loving. It

from his pocket, and shook tablets from it, swallowed them, and sipped the water. "Twenty-seven years," he said at last. "It's time enough to be prepared." "How long will the tablets take?" Callan asked. "You know then?" Callan nodded. "And you didn't stop me? I'm obliged to you. . . . It won't be long," Callan said and waited. Dawes said: "I insisted that if this happened I must accept the consequences. . . . But he doesn't always listen." The eyes dropped; the voice sounded faintly once more. "There are so many things one regrets. . . . But there was happiness too." His head dropped forward: it was as if he were asleep. . . .

talking about," she said. "Dawes's son," said Callan. "Where is he? Come on, darling. He loves you. He wrote it in Spanish on the photograph he sent you. He's probably waiting for you now to tell you how he sliced Meres's sleeve with a knife. Where is he?"

"He wouldn't," she said. "He promised me—"

"I told him," the girl said. "But it wasn't a tip off. I just told him. . . . He had to know."

"He shot at me with a rifle," said Callan. "Only I was lucky. A fox saved my life."

"Good God," said Keith. "Keep on saying that," said Callan. "You're on the list too." He swung back to the girl. "Where is he? Look Miss Lomax, I only want to tell him it's no use. . . . Not any more. His father's dead."

She went then, and told them where he was. It was a room above a cafe where flamenco blared in their own secret room, hidden from his father from Keith, where they could be happy. . . . But it was Callan and Meres who went there and kicked in the door to face the tall, athletic man with guns in their hands to hold him still as Callan told him Dawes was dead. It was over. . . . But the tall man didn't think so, and grabbed for a pistol, and Meres shot him while flamenco blared. Callan cursed and ran to where the tall man lay, not quite dead. "My father," the tall man said. "My father. He said it in Spanish."

"H mother, was Spanish," said Callan. "But she was a Red too. Dawes met her in Moscow. By the time she died six years ago, she was paymaster for the Red network in Andalusia. . . . and she had her son trained at Lumbumb University all ready to take over. Which he did. It's the best foreign agent school the K.G.B.'s got."

"So Meres was justified in killing him," said Hunter. "In a way," said Callan. "But every so often the feller loved his father."

"Not at all," said Hunter. "The KGB has wanted you dead for years."

And one of these days they'll get what they want, thought Callan. Aloud he said, "What happens to the girl?"

Hunter looked at his watch and turned on the TV set. "What do you suggest?" he asked. "Give her back to him," said Callan. "That should be punishment enough—even for you."

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"Very proper," said Hunter. "But he didn't love us. Did Dawes know what his wife and son were up to, do you think?"

"I think he did," said Callan, "but he was a Red too, remember. And the only big thing in his life was gain."

"And so you let him die," said Hunter. "You acted humanely—and for once you were justified. We should not persecute the dying. It would be bad for what Keith would call our image."

He paused, then continued: "This girl. This Lomax person. I've had a chat with her. She seems innocent enough—of everything except her own emotions—though of course we'll open a file on her now."

"That hardly seems an adequate penalty for the trouble she's made. . . . She met young Dawes and they had an affair in Cordoba and then in London, and she told him things. . . ." he scowled. "As women will. And young Dawes took action. Violent action. Why didn't he just send his father away?"

"Where could he go?" said Callan. "And be happy? And anyway, a journey would have killed him. Besides—"

"Go on," said Hunter. "He must have told his K.G.B. controller what was happening," said Callan, "and I think they saw this operation as a chance to kill me. They didn't give a damn about Dawes. His use was over years ago—But it was a chance to have a go at me. . . . I hope I don't sound big-headed."

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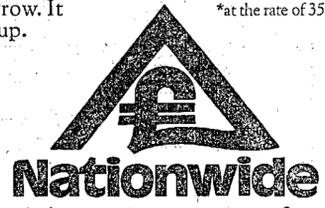
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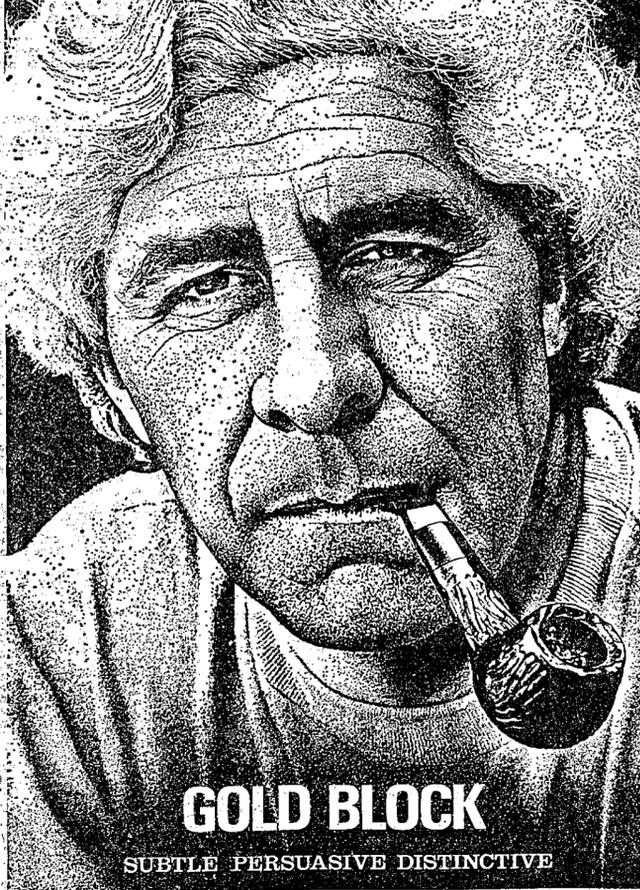
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