Galland

FILE ON A HARASSED HUNTER

THE Lear executive jet began its descent, and Callan fastened his seat-belt. "This is going to be a hell of an expensive night out in the theatre," he said, and looked down at the landscape that rushed to meet him: moorland for a background, limitless and vast, but a foreground of old, neat stone houses, and then the strip of concrete

that the Lear's tyres softly kissed in making the smooth, unflustered landing of a pilot who worked for Hunter for one reason only: he was

one reason only: he was the best.

"You like the play?" said Hunter.

"Hamlet? I always have," said Callan. "But coulan't we have waited till it came to London?"

"Unfortunately that may never happen," said Hunter.

His voice was sour, and Callan knew why. There was no Bentley waiting at the airport, because a Bentley-would have been far too conspicuous in that grimy Northern town.

Hunter loved his Bentley—not least its bullet-proof coachwork and windows of specially toughened glass.

And here he was reduced to

And here he was reduced to riding in a hired Daimler, with the local Section operawith the local Section operator for a chauffeur, and nothing but Callan to protect him from a shot from the right: for a shot from the left there was no protection but the car door—and a bullet from a Magnum revolver could go right through a car that hasn't been specially treated—all the way from the boot to the engine blook...

Thad to be a big one to get Hunter out like this. Standing orders were that he was to take maximum security precautions at all times, and here he was without even the statutory two bodyguards.

Not just a big one, thought Callan: a very, very secret one as well.

They travelled in silence; there was a dividing panel between passengers and driver, but no written guarantee that the Daimler wasn't bugged.

Amateur night—but the KGB

man was a pro

locks aren't even a joke—and there are too many ways up: stairs, lift. fire-escape—"

There was a knock at the door, and the Magnum came into Callan's hand as if he'd willed it there. He moved Hunter from the line of the window, then went to the angle of the door. "Yes?" he called.

sandwiches sir," said a voice.
Callan transferred the gun
to his pocket; kept his hand
on it, and opened the door. A
waiter with a tray, chicken
sandwiches, two bottles of
beer . And that was all.
Callan gave the man money,
and watched him lcave, and
Hunter's hand reached out for
a sandwich. Callan reached
out to stop him. His hand
closed on Hunter's forcing the

fingers open so that the sand-wich fell and parted: Chicken that by the look of it hadn't died without a

Oh, but I do," said Callan. Your experts taught me how years ago. Why are we here?"
"To learn a man's address."
And find the man—and kill "And you broke cover for that? Why not just send Meres with me — or FitzMaurice?"

"I have to know this man is dead." "My word wouldn't be good enough for you?" Hunter looked towards the Hunter looked towards the table.

"I'm hungry," he said.

"Thirsty too."

"Me an' all." said Callan.

"But first I've got to know."

His voice altered. "Sir, please," he said. "For God's sake tell me." Rare indeed to hear Callan beg, thought Hunter. Hunter.

"The man I'm after is K.G.B." Hunter said. "His code name is Lubov. That's all

I know. He's a wet-job expert. Grade Four."

And that was all it needed. Wet-job was K.G.B. jargon for assassination, and Grade Four was the highest there was.

"There's an actor at the theatre here who knows who Lubov is—and I want Lubov."

UNTER paused, and for the briefest of moments Callan tought he saw a human emotion on Hunter's face, and the emotion was grief. Then Hunter became impassive again.

"I want him for one of the first jobs he ever did," said Hunter. "A wet-job in Budapest. Just before the Hungarian uprising."

"But that was years ago."

"Twenty," said. Hunter.

"I wasn't the head of the section in those days—and this was the first big job I was responsible for. Lubov killed one of my operatives. A good one."

Callan thought: But this is craziness. Blokes like Hunter expect operatives to get killed. It's a risk they take, and they know it. And if he loses one he sends another. He doesn't start yelling for revenge like Hamlet's father.

Aloud he said: "You want Lubov knocked of because he killed some geezer twenty years ago?"

"Not a geezer," said Hunter. "A woman. A young,

"Not a geezer," said Hun-ter. "A woman. A young, brave, intelligent woman." "Yes but even so—"

"She was my daughter."
The only sane thing would have been to get him out of the hotel now and over to the airport, and back to London-except by the look London—except by the look of him he wouldn't ruddy go. It would have to be sweet reason, after all.

"You've got to be foking," said Callan. "You of all people — setting up a hate killing. And how could it be

a daughter of yours anyway?
That's dead against orders.
No relatives. It gives the fount too much leverage."
Hunter said impassively: "1" Hunter said impassively: "I' didn't know it was my daughter. Not then, I'd met her mother in Budapest before the war when I'd just got in to this—this game." He spat out the word, "It wasn't until the girl was dead that I even knew I had a daughter—and

then her mother got word to me—just before she died too." "Lubov again?" "A tank shell," said Hunter. "A tank shell," said Hunter.
"A Russian tank. Now may I
have a sandwich?"
"Why not?" said Callan.
"If we're going to behave like
amateurs let's go all the way."
But the sandwiches contained nothing more lethal
than the chicken. than the chicken. ... "Who's the actor?" asked

Evan Lang," said Hunter. "I doubt if you've heard of him, but he's good. He did a job for me. Just one. He was on some kind of cultural tour on some kind of cultural tour in East Europe—which is how he met Lubov. He has a quite remarkable memory."

"He has luck too," said Callan, "if he met a Grade. Four and survived it."

The performance of the play was less than memorable. True, the actor who played the prince was one of

the five fully paid upmembers of the Trotskyite Workers Party, and the actress who layed Ophelia performed her mad scene naked, which occasioned some novel use for her wild flowers, but the only actor worth twopence was Polomus. Polonius was Evan Lang. A big man who could look old; comic; crumbling, an actor with the range and ability and power to play Othello, or Lear, with any company in the world. And here he was shoring up this shambles: a lion among baboons. shambles: a non among baboons.
During the interval Callan said, "He really is good."
Hunter nodded. "Then what's he doing in this disaster?"
"He gets drunk," said Hunter. "At every available opportunity." opportunity."
Evan Lang died beautifully behind the arras, but wasn't on stage for the curtain

call. ... when it ended, Callan said: "Do we go back?"
"No." said Hunter. "You pick him up and we talk at the hotel."
Callan went round to the stage-door. That meant. Hunter, was alone in the Daimler, but what else could he do?

Daimler, but what else could he do?

It was worse than an amateur job, but he was stuck with it. The best he could manage was to tell their driver to cruise around at random, but to pass the street-corner by the stage-door at three-minute intervals. The driver had very properly looked incredulous at such idiccy but he'd known for long enough that they were all loonies at Hunter's H.Q.—and dangerous loonics at that. So he did as he was told, and Callan waited for Evan Lang.

HEY jumped him efficiently enough; three young men in street - fighters gear; crash helmets and motor-bike overalls and steel-shod boots, one with a knife and two with coshes, three lads with a job to do, lads in a hurry. They must have been: they even left their car engine running, as they fanned out in a line across the street and moved in on Callan. They were a problem, no doubt about it. He had the Magnum, of course, and even by the rather dody light of a street lamp he could shoot them with no trouble at all; but was it right to start gunplay in this fair if grimy

city? Was it even wise? Suppose a copper came? . . . I'll shoot only if I must thought Callan. I'm not taking a leathering from these three and proceeded to do the unex-

Instead of shrinking back, he charged at the central figure of the three, the one with the knife—and swerved as the knife-blade lunged, got two hands to the knife-man's wrist nulled big sidewater. wrist, pulled him sideways so that he cannoned into one geezer with a cosh, then pulled again so that the knifeman hit the other, and in the process found that his arm was broken, and began to scream. But the scream died as a hand like an axe bladesmashed against his law and hand like an axe blade smashed against his jaw and he fell and Callan leaped him to kick one cosh-man in the



by JAMES MITCHELL

They reached the hotel at last. Hunter 100, ed at it and sighed.
All right, thought Callan, it isn't the Ritz. But did you have to come here?
By the look on Hunter's face Callan decided that he'd had to do just that.

They went up to their rooms, and Hunter waited as Callan went over them both for bugs and booby traps: waited and sipped at sherry that was pale and dry enough even for him. Thank God. thought Callan, as he worked.

If the hotel had sent up oloroso, Hunter would have burst into tears. . . Callan went on searching. No bugs. No bombs under the bed. "Well?" Hunter sald. "I don't like it here," said Callan

Callan.
Hunter looked disgustedly round him: wallpaper that for some reason reminded him of the soup at his school. and a carpet that recalled the cabbage.

"Who would?" he said.

"I mean I don't like the set-up," said Callan. "The

"You ordered beer and sandwiches sir," said a voice.

it hadn't died without a struggle.
"David-what the devil?" Hunter began.
"I think we're at risk," Callan said. "You are at risk. My orders say that should never happen. Never. But it is happening — and if you die I'm to blame."
Hunter jerked his hand, trying to pull away, and found he couldn't: not any more. found he couldn't: not any more.

"Don't you think you'd better tell me what I'm mixed up in?" Callan asked, and Hunter nocded at last. Callan released him, and Hunter looked at the livid marks that Callan's fingers had made.

"You don't know your own strength," he said.

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