THE SUNDAY EXPRESS August 29 1976

1.5

Suddenly, a blaze of light in the sky

throat and knew at once that it had connected, that there was a good chance that the second cosh-man might be dead, though there was no time to find out. He wanted to know things,

he wanted to know things, and for that he needed the living. . . He went to the man he'd kicked, who was on his knees, groaning, but even so looked up appalled as Callan stood over him: "Who sent you?" said Callan

"Who sent you?" said Callan. The young man groaned out a blasphemy, and Callan stooped, his thumbs pressed into the young man's arm-pits, found the pressure points even through the over-alls. The young man's next groan became a scream, and he shot upright.

groan became a scream, and he shot upright. "Who sent you?" said Callan again. He was in a hurry too. "Look," he said, "you'd better tell me. Other-wise I might get rough," The pain beneath the armpus flicked, just once, needle-

HE stage door opened, and Evan Lang appeared. Evan Lang, who'd missed his cur-tain call and been loose for an hour or more. He moved into the dodgy lamplight and stooped to peer at the un-conscious knife-man. "What bloody man is that?" he said. "Wrong play," said Callan. "Wrong seemed to be having

* That's Macbeth. Lang seemed to be having difficulty in getting himself upright, and when Callan went to him he found out why. Lang was monumentally drunk. Callan didn't find the drunk. Callan didn't ind the fact surprising, not that night. He steered Lang away up the street, and waited for Hunter. The fight had taken

Callan asked more ques-tions, and found they'd got a bit of luck. They were about due for some. . . . Callan listened as the driver talked, then asked: "If it's a club we'll need a member to sign us in." " Tru a member," the driver

"I'm a member," the driver said, and Callan sighed. It needed but that, He put down the speaking tube, and Hunter said : "I'd like your report." Callan looked at Evan Lang:

Callan loosed at Evan Lang: he was sitting bolt upright, and by the look of him, sound asleep. "There were three young fellers by the stage door who wanted to give me martial arts lessons," said Callan. "It was very educa-tional." "No doubt." said Hunter.

ional." "No doubt," said Hunter. "Are they dead ?." "One of them may be," said Callan. "But there's more." He told it, and Hunter listened. "You can handle it " he said

"You can handle it," he said "You can hear at last. "I could if I had a back-up man," said Callan. "You've got one," said Hunter. "Me."

flicked, just once, sharp "Plastic Mac," the young "Who?" "Joe MacNamara." the man said. "We call "You've got once, "You've got once, "You've got once, "The craziest night of the year. . . Suddenly Lang opened his eyes and said: "Murder most foul, as in the bast it is.

young man said. We can him Plastic."
"Have you been to my hotel too?" asked Callan.
"Not us." the young man said
"Who then?"
But the young man was impatient, and pressed too hard. The young man fainted ...
amateur night ...
best it is.
"But this most foul, strange and unnatural—!" then N instantly went back to slcep. "Hamlet a gain," said Callan.
"Hamlet a gain," said Callan.
"But the young man was impatient, and pressed too hard. The young man fainted ...
amateur night ...
"To store door opened,"

must." Hunter philosophic was more than Callan could take. He sought refuge in practicalities. "You can't be my back-up man," he said. "You need a cun." диn '. I've got a gun," said

Hunter Hunter, Hunter never carried a gun; generals never do, Callan wished he were as drunk as Evan Lang.

ACNAMARA'S was brash and opulent, and served by bar-maids who thought that night's Ophelia had had a good idea. Or perhaps it was the heat, thought Callan. But a: least it helped to get rid of their driver be went

Luboy." Evan Lang

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Hunter.

Sut, took a blow from the "That's a club out by the difference of the second se

on.... Put out the light." "Why didn't he kill you ?" said Callan. "He thought I was on his side," Lang said. "Funny thing—I never used to drink much before I saw Ophelia die." He smiled, then drank. "I played Hamlet in those days I was going to be good." Roto

die." He smiled, then drank. " I played Hamlet in those days. I was going to be good." "Where is Lubov now?" asked Hunter. "Notting Hill," said Lang. "Hamlet Street . . Funny, that. Number 43. Top floor." He brooded for a moment. "Another funny thing. It was 20 years later--and I knew him at once. He didn't know me. . . I was going to take the flat below--but not atter I saw him. Not where Lubov. . . Keeps Death his court ! That's Richard II." He turned to Hunter. "I played Richard on that tour too. And then I started drinking. You owe me my career." He went back to sleep, still sitting bolt upright. Callan sipped cautiously at his Scotch. "You've kept an eye on that for 20 years?" he asked. "I had no choice," said

Drawings by

Hunter waited, and they walked down the corridor together. The bodyguard Hunter had hit, pushed up on his hands, groaning, as they approached, and Hunter tapped him again. He went back to oblivion. "I take it that MacNamara is dead," Hunter said. "He talked first," said Cal-lan. "We've got all we need. Let's go home." "To the hotel you mean ?" "No," said Callan. "I mean home ... Where you're safe." "Very well." said Hunter. "I you insist. But I think we "If you insist. But I think we should take Evan Lang with us.

"I thought you would," said Callan.

S o they tore their driver away from the topless barmaid, and their pilot from a poker game, and poured Lang into the Lear and put him back to sleep with more whisky, and the jet climbed, and the lights of the grimy town twinkled below them, tiny as diamond chips. And then suddenly there was a big one too, a real Koh-I-**C** 0 "You've kept an eye on that for 20 years?" he asked. "I had no choice," said Hunter. "He was once engaged to my daughter. "Shall we deal with Mac-Namara?" "What a bout HIM?" Callan noded at Evan Lang: a man who should have been in his prime, but was already so sunk in decay that then suddenly there was a big one too, a real Koh-I-Noor of a diamond, that erupted and shimmered as the Lear continued to climb. "Your hotel room," Callan said to Hunter. "They didn't call him. Plastic Mac for nothing." "Leave him," said Hunter. "Leave him," said Hunter. "Even we can't hurt him

nothing." The Lear sailed on into darkness. "No more irony," Hunter, "Just tell it." said

in those days...you owe me my career'

"A man came to see him," said Callan. "Gave him five thousand pounds to have us both killed and promised five thousand more when he'd both killed and promised five thousand more when he'd done it. So he set his three rough boys on me-fifty quid apiece and petrol money." He grinned. "It seems they used to enjoy their work... "For you he put a plastic bomb under the bed while we were at the theatre. We were blown hefore we comenstarted.

were at the theatre. We were blown before we coen started, and you could be dead. They'd have loved that in Deherzhinsky Street." "Who hired him?" "A bloke with a briefcase full of fivers. Bloke in his forties. No scars, no accent. But MacNamara didn't think he was English." Evan Lang opened his eyes again. "Str?

again. "Lubov," he said. Callan

LUDOV," he said. Callan looked at him. "You back with us" "Lubov has grey hair and grey eyes," said Lang, then added as if it were part of the same sentence, "i need a drink."

Callan reached out to a locker and grimaced as his ribs reminded him of the blow they had received, pro-duced whisky and glasses.

the head of the Section—and you hadn't even joined. I suppose in a way. Lubov's being sent to kill us both is rather a compliment." He settled back in his seat. "All the same, I want you to get rid of him." "You and me both mate," he said, and poured and sipped as Lang drained his glass. "You'll kill him tonight?" Lang asked. "Luboy. Hamle' Street. He'll die tonight?" "You'll kill him tonight?" Lang asked. "Luboy. Hamle' Street. He'll die tonight?" Callan said nothing, and Lang turned to Hunter. "It's got to be tonight," he said. "I've got a show tomorrow." Then he went back to sleep. Hunter said: "I think it would be best if you did kill Luboy tonight." Then he caught the look in Callan's eye, and added testily: "I'm not thinking about revenge." "Aren't you?" said Callan. HIS time there was the Bentley waiting, and a couple of body-guards to help decant Evan Lang, and Callan made his own way to Hamlet Street, to look at the flat where a K.G.B. operator

lived, an operator who owed five thousand pounds to a dead man. No lights on in the flat,

No lights on in the flat, or in the whole house, but the locks on the door would be too much for him even if Lubov slept. . . For locks like that he'd need the help of a friend, and the friend would need a gallon of aftershave if he ever found out what Callan was up to. . But it had to be quick : before Lubov had time to read his morning paper and turn Hunter forced himself to speak honestly with this man whose life he had so irrespon-sibly put at risk.

Whose file he had so frespon-sibly put at risk. "Not exclusively, Luboy has manifestly been sent here to kill me - quite pos-sibly you, too. That's why he allowed Lang to see him. "He knew that Lang would contact us. How fortunate for Luboy that to see Lang I had to leave London. It made his job so much easier." "You're saying that he was on to Lang, then?" asked Callan. "That he knew Lang had done a job for you all those years ago. Luboo must have done - otherwise he

his morning paper and turn

said Lonely. "At this time of night," said Callan. "You get me out of a nice hot bed just so I can open up geezer's drum and then

scarper ?" "That's right," said Callan. "Why?" said Lonely, put-ting his finger on the problem, then added to make himself clear, "What for?" A hundred quid," said

Callan. Lonely sighed, and reached

Lonely sighed, and reached for his trousers, ... Deft. thought Callan. That was the word. Deft. Lonely and his magic fingers. Just that, and some skeleton keys, and a few twirls. Plus an oil can, judiciously applied, in order that the door wouldn't squeak. And at the end of it all Luboy's drum was onen to squeak. And at the end of it all Lubov's drum was open to him, and Lonety hunched down into his raincoat and prepared to go back to bed. "A hundred nicker you said." His voice was a whisper. "Tomorrow," said Callan. "You know I'll pay you." For some reason Lonely looked up then. All those years, thought Callan. All those jobs. The little man knew him like a greasy, well-

thumbed book.

"You take care of yourself. Mr. Callan," he said, then although he was niffing, he added, "Want me to come with you?" with you ?"" in the co const "No." said Callan. "J'll manage." I've got to, he thought

wouldn't have used Lang as a bait to get you." Hunter noaded.

"Then why wait 20 years?" "I told you." said Hunter. "Twenty years ago I wasn't the head of the Section—and you headn't even toined at

"See you down the boozer then," said Lonely, and tip-toed away as if from a grave. Come come. Callan Come come, Callan admonished himself: this will not do, and took out the Magnum he had so carefully cleaned and reloaded. He entered Number 43, Hamlet Street, screwed on the silencer, and climbed the stairs

hand went at once towards his pillow, the Magnum gave two soft thuds. like boots two soft thuds. like boots slammed down on a carpet, and Lubov, whose business was death, was dead. Callan looked at him : grey hair, grey eyes. Even as a corpse he looked ten years younger than his age. Would his loved ones mourn him ? he wondered. He went back to his own flat, and brewed coffee, and meditated on Hunter's madness, and in the middle of it all answered his own ques-tion : No one would ever mourn Lubov, any more than tion : No one would ever mourn Luboy, any more than anyone would mourn him, Callan, when his turn came to die. Not even Lonely would mourn him, because nobody would tell the little man that Callan was dead.

Next: File on a

beautiful boxer

G James Mitchell Scripts Ltd., 1976

'I played Hamlet

a couple of minutes, no more, and Callan stood in a fury of impatience until the Daimler appeared, and he hustled Lang into the seat by the offside door and ran round to the near-side. A little more protection for worked for Hunter, too. He must learn to take his chances.... The driver's voice came over the speaking tube. Where to?" he asked.

"The hotel," said Hunter, but Callan veloed that. "Just drive around for a bit," he said.

cia, the said. Evan Lang spoke then—his voice resonant and unslurred. "I must have a drink," he said, then added, to make his point clear. "An alcoholic drink." And Callan knew he spoke the truth the trouble all part of the driver. "Where can we get a drink?" he

"Your best bet is Mac-Namara's, the driver said.

now." O get to Joe "Plastic Mac" MacNamara it was necessary to elim-in a te two body-guards first, two muscular gentlemen who lurked behind a door marked "Private" in scarlet letters, three inches high where the disco music was still all too audible. Calian found he couldn't take them both, and was re-lieved to find he didn't have to. Hunter still knew how to use a revolver's barrel as a club. The two bodyguards fell softly to the thickly-carpeted floor, and Callan and Hunter moved to the door marked "Director" and pushed it open-still as deft as Meres or FitzMaurice — and Callan leaped inside. The man behind the desk looked into the Magnum's barrel and was still. "You're making a mistake." at least it helped to get rid of their driver : he went straight to the bar. Skin and tonic. And let's get him out of here while he can still drive, thought Callan... Now it was time to talk while they could still hear. The blare of disco music was descenting but to the bar. Skin and the desk looked into the Magnum's barrel and was "You're making a mistake," "The story of my life." said Callan. "Only it's the

"You're making a mistake," he said. "The story of my life." said Callan. "Only it's the other geezer who dies when I do." "No protection money, not ever." MacNamara said. Callan shook his head. "Just a little information." he said. "That's not much to ask in exchange for your lifc." And in the end he got it. The blare of disco music was deafening . . but at least Lang had been able to walk. All Hunter had said was, "There's a drink waiting," and Evan Lang had moved. Like Frankenstein's monster— but he'd moved.

" Even now."

but he'd moved. They poured whisky into him and his speech, though slurred came at last. And he knew what Hunter wanted. "Luboy." he said. "Some-body sent me a job in Buda-pest." Callan flicked a glance at Hunter. "And. I met Luboy." And in even if MacNamara resented bitterly that for once he even if MacNamara reserved bitterly that for once he should be obliged to give rather than receive. And when he'd got what he came for Callan thanked him nicely and turned as if to leave, and MacNamara crabhed for the MacNamara grabbed Llama 38 Super he kept in his desk drawer, because you never knew when such a thing

ang, too, turned to Was it you who sent might come in handy. And Callan shot him twice, head and heart, the shots echoing the beat of a bass guitar. He came out to where

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