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*This short story is taken from a chapter in my
third book, FACES IN THE MIRROR (Multiple Lives).*

THE ORIENT EXPRESS

Before leaving the CIA office in Paris, Barry coded the data into his day book and touched his lighter to the flash paper. There was a poof, a slight soapy smell and a smoke ring in the air, then nothing. No residue and no ashes to reconstruct. Dennis Becker, the Chief of Station, had given him a slip of paper with the names of the agents he would meet during his trip on the Orient Express.

Earlier in the day, Barry was in his office making notes so he could give a verbal report on his hush-hush errand for MI.5, when Dennis walked in, "I can't believe you're back so soon. How was jolly old England?"

"I didn't get to see much of it although I did ride on a red double decker bus and saw the beginning of a XXX movie."

"Something tells me not to ask about that movie. Sir Lambuth telephoned me last night. He was astounded that you accomplished so much in such a short time. I told him I've

become accustomed to the speed at which my super spook operates, although it sometimes worries the hell out of me. He said the address book you took from the guy who had been tailing you was a big help. They picked him up where you left him and found 'Rabbi' Unruth at the address in Amos' book. They've started a roundup of his followers."

"Give me a couple of minutes, Dennis, and I'll be able to give you a verbal on everything in chronological order."

"Good, I'll get us some coffee. I'm anxious to hear how you handled it so quickly."

Barry briefed him while they smoked their pipes and drank their coffee. Dennis didn't say a word until Barry finished.

"Another professional job, mon ami. The ballpoint pen in the ear to make him talk, I'm familiar with but where did you learn about the Carotid artery pinch?"

"At the farm. We had a Green Beret doctor as a guest lecturer one day and he taught us several such moves for non-lethal take outs. He advised us to release the artery after five seconds as too long a pinch could induce a stroke or death. You know, a thought occurred to me during his lecture; if I was ever in a situation which called for a take out with extreme prejudice, a long carotid pinch would accomplish that and the cause of death would be listed as a stroke."

As Barry put his notes in the 'burn basket' Dennis said, "That's good data to keep in the back of our mind. Guess I'd

better brief you on your next trip. It may be your last one as a spook on loan from the Air Force. Your schedule has been firmed up. You'll depart for Washington, D.C. the first week in December, retire from the Air Force on the 31st, spend an unspecified amount of time at Camp Perry for training as Assistant Chief of Station, then back here."

"Sure doesn't seem possible my retirement is so near," Barry said. "Where's my next errand going to take me?"

"I've scheduled you for a lengthy trip on the Orient Express to meet a few of the agents we run from Paris. You'll be their case officer when you return from your Air Force retirement trip."

Barry smiled, "I've read and heard so much about the mystery and intrigue of that train. Everyone in the intelligence business needs at least one trip on the Orient Express."

Dennis cautioned, "You might feel differently when you get back. You'll depart la Gare de Nord at midnight tomorrow and ..."

Leaning forward so as not to miss a word, Barry said, "Boy, that adds to the intrigue, leaving at midnight on a cold wintery night, on the Orient Express. Makes one almost expect to see Sidney Greenstreet shrouded in steam from the engine at the station."

Handing Barry a list of names, Dennis continued, "You'll have the same Wagons-Lits (sleeping car) on the Simplon Orient

Express, for the entire trip to Vienna. The bonafides to assure you of their identity will be the same for all meetings: You're to be smoking one of your leather covered pipes, carrying a book with a blue cover and wearing black horn rim glasses. The agent will greet you in French and comment on the aroma of your tobacco. You're to ask, "Are you a pipe smoker?" If he replies, "Yes I am," that means a safe meeting. If he says anything else, and if he adds or subtracts anything from his answer, break off the contact immediately

Barry asked, "Will I receive anything from them?"

"Nothing of a routine nature. Their regular reports are picked up by a courier. Antonio Donatelli will board the train in Milano. He runs several OPs (Observation Posts) for us throughout Northern Italy and has provided high quality information. This is only an introductory meeting so it's up to you how long you want to talk with him. He will have his own compartment and detrain at Venice. Luigi Gallo will board at Venice and de-train at Trieste. An agent of influence, Luigi is the Capitano of the port. Fabio Calabria, another agent of influence, and Captain of the Port in Trieste. Between Lugi and Fabio we keep abreast of Russian activity in the gulf of Venice area. There's an hour delay in Trieste, enough time to get acquainted with Fabio, so he will get off before the train departs. Keep in mind that Trieste was once

an Italian seaport but, in 1947, the United Nations made it into a free territory and in 1954, divided it between Italy and Yugoslavia. Even though Marshal Tito refuses to bow to Moscow, Yugoslavia is still a Communist country so CYA (cover your ass)."

"Will I have any trouble crossing into Yugoslavia?"

"Probably not. Your French passport, visas and other papers are all top quality. When you reach Zagreb, Jozef Kalman will board the train and be with you through Yugoslavia until you stop at the Austrian border. Jozef is an arms dealer. He buys from the Russians, sells to the Arabs and keeps us informed about both. When you arrive at the Westbahnhof in Vienna you'll be met by Karl Breit as you enter the depot. Karl is an electronics engineer who travels through the Balkin countries and keeps us informed about Russian activities in those areas. Karl will have your Air France flight reservation to Paris and take you to the airport. Any questions?"

"No questions. Guess I'd better go home and pack."

"Pack with care," Dennis suggested. "The outrider of an early blizzard has hit Central and Southern Europe and you'll be heading into the middle of it. The train is well heated, but the outside temperature will be in the single digits or below. That train has been known to get stuck in snow banks, especially in Eastern Europe. Garde tu, spook." (Take care

of yourself.)

With Dennis' warning in mind, Barry packed layers of heavy of clothing and wore the new Danish ski coat he bought in London. He telephoned for a taxi and arrived at le Gare de Nord with time to spare. He walked along platform 2 and could see the increasing snow fall beyond the roof of the depot. He found Wagons-Lits #5. Now, using his cover name, Jacques Damien, he settled into his luxurious compartment just as the Chef de Train called, "En Voiture" (all aboard). With great puffs and the hissing of steam the train moved out of the covered depot into the heavy falling snow exactly on time, in the tradition of the Orient Express. The excitement of being on that train kept Jacques awake most of the night. He was awed by the brocaded walls, thick carpeting and the velvet sofa that converted to a bed. His compartment had a bathroom with marble wash basin, commode and a small shower stall. There were even crystal vases containing fresh flowers on the wall.

The further East they traveled the heavier the snow fall but the boisterous wind kept the tracks clear all through France. The snow and wind intensified as they crossed into Switzerland. At daybreak, they were running along the shore of Lake Geneva with snow capped peaks of the Alps on the eastern horizon. The heavy snow continued.

The rich decor of the restaurant car included paneling of

mahogany and teak inlaid with rosewood. There were original paintings by Delacroix and Seymour. The chairs were covered with hand-embossed leather; cutlery was sterling silver. Jacques turned over one of the plates and found the china was Limoges. Crystal chandeliers hung from the gilded ceiling.

As his breakfast was served they stopped at the Swiss border. Passports and visas were checked. The train then passed through the 12 mile Simplon tunnel and emerged into the bright sunshine of Italy.

Two men seated across from Jacques were engaged in a whispered conversation. He couldn't understand them but recognized they were speaking Russian. They frequently glanced over at Jacques. He sensed their eyes on his back as he left the car to return to his compartment, a little bit on edge. Seven hours later, after numerous and inexplicable stops, while crossing the flat country side, they arrived in Milano. Jacques filled and lit his leather covered pipe, put on his black framed glasses and sat down with his blue book.

There was a knock. When Jacques opened the door, he and Antonio Donatelli went through their bonafides. Antonio was dressed like a merchant marine with dark gray pants, black pea coat and a black Greek fisherman hat. Jacques invited him to have a seat and said, "I'll ring for the attendant to bring some drinks."

Antonio said, "I brought a bottle of my family's home-

made vino rosso for you to try, if you like wine."

"I do like wine. That was very thoughtful of you."

Antonio pulled a litre bottle wrapped in straw from his satchel and set it on the sideboard. Then he brought out two stem glasses and poured a liberal amount in each. They drank toasts to many things with that homemade 'dago red' and Jacques began to feel more relaxed.

He told Antonio about the two men who stared at him while whispering in Russian during breakfast.

"Jacques, I ride the Orient Express often and those men could be anything from petty blackmarket operators to high paid KGB assassins. Maybe you look like someone they know or maybe the mystic of the Orient Express has you imagining things. When we go to the Restaurant Car for lunch, I'll sit behind you. If the men are there, look in their direction and scratch the back of your neck. We'll meet back here after lunch."

At noon they left the compartment separately and Jacques was seated at the table he had during breakfast. The same two men sat across from him. Jacques looked in their direction and rubbed the back of his neck. After lunch Jacques returned to his compartment and Antonio quickly followed. He was frowning when he sat down, "I've seen those two many times in Verona. They head up a blackmarket operation in Northern Italy, so they're not too petty. They're German but are known

to speak Russian, with the idea that people won't suspect them. I've also heard they've done work as assassins, on a small scale. Keep away from them, Jacques - far away."

"I'm glad to know my built-in warning antenna is still working," Jacques said. "They sure made me nervous, staring at me and whispering to each other."

Jacques and Antonio became well acquainted and developed a good rapport by the time they finished the wine. Before the train pulled into the terminal, Antonio left the compartment so he could detrain from a different section of the train.

As they slowed to a stop, Jacques filled and lit his pipe, put on his glasses and sat down with his blue book. He opened his door to a knock. He and Luigi Gallo went through their bonafides and Jacques invited him to have a seat. Luigi was a short fat man. His 5'6" frame carried 250 pounds. He was dressed in black pants and a black double breasted uniform coat. His clothes were covered with gold braid, down the outside of both pant legs, four bands of gold braid on the cuff of both sleeves and huge gold braided epaulets on the shoulders. The black uniform hat, held under his arm, had a large gold badge and scrolls of gold on the visor. They sat for a while and engaged in small talk. Luigi said he makes the trip frequently and suggested they go down to the salon car to have a few drinks.

The furniture in the salon was red and black leather and

inlaid teak wood. The walls were covered with matching leather panels. The ceiling was decorated with gold scrolls and colorful floral designs. So much luxury, Jacques felt like whispering. They had the salon to themselves. A waiter came in from the restaurant car and they ordered drinks. When the waiter left, Luigi handed Jacques four rolls of film, "These show Russian Navy activity in the Gulf of Venice. I'm sure the company will find it interesting."

It was after midnight when they arrived at Trieste and Luigi detrained from the salon car. Jacques returned to his compartment to prepare for his meeting with Fabio Calabria. A knock on the door and they went through the bonafides in the compartment. Fabio was over six feet tall and thin. He was dressed the same as Luigi but on Fabio it looked more believable. He gave Jacques three rolls of film, "We've had considerable Russian truck traffic around the port during the last couple of weeks. This film will identify the units and type of vehicles."

"Thank you Fabio, this will be very helpful."

"I need to tell you before the train leaves, Jacques, I've been advised that several former high ranking German SS officers escaped from Berlin and are attempting to get to Switzerland through this area. The Yugo border guards are going crazy trying to find them or the people who are helping them. You'll probably have several stops and searches before

you reach the Austrian border. You might want to hide the film."

"You're right, but I don't want to hide it in a place that points to me. Maybe the salon car would be a place that wouldn't be searched."

Fabio stood outside the salon car door while Jacques looked for a hiding place. The three ceiling lights looked like hanging milk glass punch bowls. He pulled over a chair to climb on and placed the rolls of film in the bowl. The outline of the film did now show through the milk glass so he replaced the chair and went into the hallway. Fabio said good-bye and detrained. Jacques had the attendant make up his bed so he could retire.

At 0400, Jacques was awakened by loud shouting and slamming doors. The train was not moving. The snow was heavy on the ground and still coming down. He could see many flash lights moving around outside but no other lights. There were no shapes of buildings, vehicles or people visible. He dressed in case he had to detrain.

There was a pounding on his door. When Jacques opened the door, there stood three men in green uniforms of the State Police with their automatic weapons at ready. Jacques could not understand what they were saying and told them, "Je suis Francais." One of the men shouted something and held out his hand. Assuming he wanted his passport, Jacques handed it to

him. The soldier glanced at it and tossed the passport on a chair. He motioned for Jacques to move out to the passageway. Jacques moved as far as the doorway and stood there with his arms folded. One soldier stood with him as the other two searched his compartment. They searched thoroughly, including the lavatory tank, under the basin and behind the doors. They tore the bed apart and emptied the wall vases on the floor. They spilled the contents of his luggage on the floor and searched it with the toe of their boots. Finally they were satisfied. As they were leaving, the one who did all the talking, saluted and said, "Merci." Jacques was livid but smart enough to keep his mouth shut. He repacked his luggage. The attendant came in shaking his head, making a clucking sound and re-made the bed. He said, "Three hundred soldiers halted the train to search it for escaped former Nazi SS officers. You were lucky Monsieur. Some with German passports were strip searched and three were taken off the train. All the soldiers have left the train and we should resume our journey soon." As he said that, the train began to move.

Jacques went back to bed, fully clothed. Too angry to go back to sleep, he dozed fitfully until there was a knock on his door. "Monsieur, the stop by the soldiers caused a two hour delay. It is now 0600, and we will be serving breakfast from now till we arrive in Zagreb."

Jacques thanked him, shaved, showered and put on differ-

ent clothes. He stopped at the salon. No one else was around so he went in and pulled a chair under the far ceiling light. He held his breath as he mounted the chair, reached in and pulled out a hand full of film rolls. They were all there. He put them into his coat pocket, climbed down, replaced the chair and went to the restaurant car.

When the breakfast dishes were removed Jacques sat alone in the car, drinking coffee as the train pulled into the station at Zagreb. He filled and lit his pipe, put on his black framed glasses and picked up his blue book to await his next meeting. Jozef Kalman came to the table and they recited the bonafides. Jacques invited him to have a seat. The waiter brought more coffee and departed.

Jacques told him about the soldiers stopping and searching the train. Jozef frowned and said, "That has been going on all over Yugoslavia. The Army's under a lot of pressure to find those escaped SS officers. After a couple of hours of getting acquainted and drinking coffee, they went to their respective compartments. Jacques decided to skip lunch and catch up on the sleep he lost. He awoke at 1500, when the Chef de Train walked through the car announcing their arrival at the Austrian border. The train puffed slowly up to the border station. Only passports and visas were examined. The Wagons-Lits attendant came through with the border guards and Jacques asked him, "How far to Vienna?"

"Two Hundred Kilometers, monsieur."

As Jacques started towards the lounge car, he saw the two men who stared at him in the Restaurant car, being taken off in hand cuffs. He asked the attendant, "What did they do?"

"Big blackmarket dealers, monsieur. The Austrian police finally caught up with them."

Jacques shook his head and decided to return to his compartment for the two hour ride to Vienna.

The train slowed for it's entry into Vienna's Westbahnhof as Jacques gathered all his things for a quick exit to the solid feel of the walkway into the station. Before detraining he filled and lit his pipe, put on his glasses and carried his book with the blue cover.

Karl Breit, standing at the station entrance, tipped his hat and initiated the bonafides. He then escorted Jacques to the passport and customs areas.

Karl said, "Now that we're through with the formalities, I imagine you're hungry, what kind of food would you prefer?"

"It's been ten years since I left Vienna but I remember the Atlanta Hotel. Does it still exist?"

"It sure does, it's one of our finer downtown hotels and my uncle is the General Manager."

Jacques asked, "By any chance is Hans Muller your uncle?"

Karl stopped in his tracks, "Yes, but how did you know

that?"

"I lived at the Atlanta in 1947, and knew your uncle well. I would enjoy seeing him again. To prevent surprises, I must tell you, when I lived at the Atlanta, I was a Captain in the U.S. Army Air Force by the name of Barry Flamm."

"I understand, at the hotel, you will be Barry Flamm. Your flight for Paris takes off at 2300 hours, so we have plenty time for dinner at the Atlanta."

They reached Karl's big gray Mercedes 500 and, within twenty minutes, were parked at the Atlanta Hotel. Inside Karl asked for Herr Muller. Hans greeted his nephew with a hand shake and a hug. He turned to be introduced to Karl's friend and his mouth dropped open as he recognized his tenant from years ago. With a hand shake, a hug and a choked voice, he said, "Mien American Captaine, you haven't changed at all."

"The same guy Hans, ten years older and still Air Force but now I'm a Colonel."

"Sehr gut. I knew you'd do well. You always seemed such a fine officer."

"Can you join us for dinner, Hans?"

"I'll be glad to join you but, of course, you both must be my guest."

The Matre d' escorted them to the best table and a string orchestra played throughout the dinner. It was an enjoyable evening but soon time to depart for the airport.

As they stood up to leave, Hans said, "Now that you've had a short visit to your old home, you must come back on vacation and stay here as my guest. I'm sure you'd enjoy the new Vienna.

"I would love to see Vienna and the beautiful blue Danube again. It's very kind of you to invite me. I'll make every effort to do that. I'll contact you after the first of the year. Auf wiedersehen, mein freund."

"Auf wiedersehen, I hope you can come back soon."

The Air France flight for Paris was loading when they arrived at the airport. Jacques said good-bye to Karl and boarded the plane.

With a start, Jacques awoke from another terrible dream of being arrested by the KGB in Moscow. The stewardess told him, "We're serving breakfast now, monsieur, we are an hour from Paris."

"Merci mademoiselle, J'ai Mourais de faim" (I'm starved). As he finished his breakfast and a second cup of coffee, he felt and heard, first the flaps and then the landing gear going down. A smooth landing and Jacques again became Barry Flamm. After another wild taxi ride to the Embassy, he walked up the stairs and Jane greeted him with, "Well, our spook from the Orient Express. How was the trip?"

"I'm glad I had the experience but once is enough. I'll

take an airplane ride anytime."

Dennis stuck his head out the door, "You mean you didn't get a thrill out of the ride?"

"A thrill, yes, but it sure takes a long time to get there. I was just telling Jane, I'll take a plane over a train anytime."

With a hand shake, Dennis said, "Come on in the office, mon ami, things have happened while you were gone."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

More than half of Wm. L. Cramer's military and civilian careers have been devoted to the professions of intelligence, investigations and security. In 1969, he began writing, internationally, for technical publications.

After attending eight different institutions and universities in the United States, Europe and the Mideast, Dr. Cramer was awarded a Ph.D. in Business Management in 1975.

For over twenty two years, he was an adjunct professor at Shelby State College, The University of Tennessee at Memphis and the University of Texas at Arlington. Before leaving Texas, he prepared and taught a course for veterans and senior citizens, *WRITING YOUR MEMOIRS*. He taught the course at Tarrant County College.

He has been President of the intelligence consulting firm, Cramer Intelligence Associates, since 1984. In County Courts, he served with success nine times as an expert witness in trials on security matters.

Bill Cramer's first book, *AIR COMBAT WITH THE MIGHTY 8TH*, was published in 1994.

His second book, *TACTICS FOR PERSONAL SECURITY*, was published in 1996 for family and friends.

His first espionage novel, *FACES IN THE MIRROR*, was published in 2000.

Bill's second novel, *HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS (with the same cast as the first one)* is in the hands of a publisher and expected to be published in August or September, 2002.

Dr. Cramer's sixth book, as yet unnamed, a continuation of his series of espionage novels, is a work in progress.

He has also completed an autobiographical trilogy, *THE COST OF FREEDOM* (Between Wars, The Korean War, Vietnam and The Cold War.) It is looking for a publisher.