

A MYSTERIOUSPRESS.COM BOOK



# EDWARD D. HOCH



A JEFFERY RAND AND  
NICK VELVET COLLECTION

# THE SPY AND THE THIEF



# The Spy and The Thief

A Jeffery Rand and Nick Velvet Collection

Edward D. Hoch



MYSTERIOUSPRESS.COM



INTEGRATED MEDIA

NEW YORK

# CONTENTS

## A Book with Three Introductions

### RAND, the master spy

The Spy Who Came to the Brink

The Spy Who Had Faith in Double-C

The Spy Who Took the Long Route

The Spy Who Came to the End of the Road

The Spy Who Purchased a Lavender

The Spy and the Calendar Network

The Spy and the Bermuda Cipher

### about NICK VELVET, the master thief

The Theft of the Clouded Tiger

The Theft from the Onyx Pool

The Theft of the Brazen Letters

The Theft of the Wicked Tickets

The Theft of the Laughing Lions

The Theft of the Coco Loot

The Theft of the Blue Horse

*For Bernie*

# A BOOK WITH THREE INTRODUCTIONS

DEAR READER:

Twenty-eight years ago we began a series of 15 original paperbacks devoted exclusively to detective-crime-suspense short stories and novelets. The first book in the series was also the first book of Dashiell Hammett's short fiction—*The Adventures of Sam Spade* (1944). The last book of the series was also a collection of Dashiell Hammett's short stories—*A Man Named Thin* (1962). In the intervening 18 years\* there were 13 other books—seven more by Dashiell Hammett, two by Stuart Palmer, one each by John Dickson Carr, Margery Allingham, Roy Vickers, and O. Henry.

The purpose of this series was twofold: to bring excellent short stories and novelets to the reading public and to rescue these stories from oblivion. Too often the finest short stories are “lost” after their original magazine appearance, and as the years pass, the stories become unavailable, sometimes even unattainable. We hoped to give these stories a longer life, a measure of permanence; our hopes were only partially realized, since the relative frailty of the paperback format resulted in most of the copies vanishing. Today these 15 first editions, all but one of them 21 to 28 years old, are eagerly sought as “collectors’ items.”

Exactly one-quarter of a century after the first book we decided to revive the enterprise—with precisely the same dual objective. Thus, in 1969, we began the sequel-series with another first book of short stories and novelets by another great name in the field—*The Case of the Murderer's Bride* by Erie Stanley Gardner. One year later we presented Lawrence Treat's *P As in Police*. And now we offer you the third in this new series—Edward D. Hoch's *The Spy and the Thief*.

This third book is a double-barreled collection—14 stories of which seven are adventures of Rand, the Double-C man, and seven are exploits of Nick Velvet. Rand is a “different” kind of spy-and-counterspy, and Nick Velvet is a very “different” kind of thief. But we'll explore these “differences” more deeply in Introductions Number Two and Number Three ...

Edward D. Hoch's record as a contributor to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* is one of the most impressive in our 30-year history. His first story in *EQMM* was published

in the December 1962 issue. In the next nine years, no less than 59 of Mr. Hoch's stories appeared in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*—an astonishing number. Now, in making a double selection of his stories for this book, we have reread our editorial forewords and afterwords and have learned, to our chagrin, that we have told readers virtually nothing about the creator of Rand and Nick Velvet.

So, as a close to Introduction Number One, we now give you the

## **DOSSIER ON EDWARD D(ENTINGER) HOCH**

**PERSONAL:** Born February 22, 1930, Rochester, N.Y. Attended U. of Rochester, served in U.S. Army (1950–52) as Military Policeman at Chaplains' School, Fort Slocum, N.Y. Employed at Rochester Public Library, Pocket Books, Inc. (N.Y.C.), Hutchins Advertising Co. (Rochester). Married Patricia A. McMahon, 1957.

**NOVELS:** *The Shattered Raven* (Lancer, 1969). *The Transection Machine* (Walker, 1971).

**SHORT STORIES:** Nearly 400 published. Book: *The Judges of Hades and Other Simon Ark Stories* (Leisure Books, 1971).

**TRANSLATIONS:** Short stories reprinted in England, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, West Germany, Norway, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Brazil, South Africa, Australia, Japan.

**ANTHOLOGIES and TEXTBOOKS:** Short stories reprinted in nearly 50 anthologies, including *Best Detective Stories of the Year* (1965–71). Also in four high-school textbooks, in Braille editions, and on phonograph records for classroom use.

**FEATURE FILM:** "It Takes All Kinds," starring Robert Lansing, Vera Miles, Barry Sullivan.

**TELEVISION:** "The Alfred Hitchcock Show" (1965). Rod Serling's "Night Gallery" (1971).

**AWARD:** Winner of the MWA Edgar Award (1968) for "The Oblong Room," the best short story of previous year.

**QUOTES:** "Edward D. Hoch is capable of writing a truly classic short story."—*Ellery Queen*

"Edward D. Hoch is as prolific as he is ingenious."—Anthony Boucher.

"One of the best and almost certainly the most prolific of today's practitioners of the detective short story."—Allen J. Hubin

"Satan himself could be proud of his ingenuity."—John Dickson Carr

\*Actually seven years, between 1944 and 1951, since publication of the last Hammett collection was delayed eleven years.

# INTRODUCTION NUMBER TWO

RAND IS THE HEAD of the DCC—the Department of Concealed Communications, a top-security section established by British Intelligence in 1963, shortly after the Profumo scandal. Rand, known to his colleagues and opposites throughout the world as “the Double-C man,” is an outstanding codebreaker-cipherologist-cryptanalyst, doing a kind of “pure” detective work.

Now, there is a certain phenomenon that often occurs in the mystery genre: when a nondetective character is faced with a series of baffling problems, he gradually turns detective in order to solve the problems. Thus, from story to story in this half of the book, you will witness an interesting evolution: you will watch Rand’s talents spread and take wing; the cipher-and-code specialist will become a full-fledged detective unraveling crimes in order to unravel secret messages.

Here, now, is the

## DOSSIER ON RAND

**PERSONAL:** Born C. Jeffery Rand, August 26, 1926, Paris, France, of British parents. Father was attached to British Embassy, Paris; mother was a writer for popular women’s magazines. Rand rarely uses first initial or middle name; many working with him know only his surname.

**EDUCATION:** Attended King’s School in Tercanbury, and Oxford U. Brief attendance at St. Thomas Medical School, Lambeth, kept him out of Army during World War II, but a feeling of guilt caused him to enter government service on graduation from Oxford in 1948.

**CAREER:** Rand’s first government assignment: clerk in Calendar Network, a British Intelligence group formed to gather information on Russian scientific progress, especially on German scientists working with Russians. When Calendar Network disbanded, Rand continued in intelligence work, becoming particularly skillful in cryptanalysis. When Department of Concealed Communications established in 1963. Rand appointed director.

**APPEARANCE:** Just under six feet tall, looks younger than his 40-odd years. Slim, handsome, brown hair, angular features, serious expression. Occasionally wears glasses for reading. Until recently had fondness for American cigarettes; now cutting

down on smoking.

PRIVATE LIFE: Works long hours, often sleeping on cot in Double-C office. His limited private life completely overshadowed by career. Never speaks of social activities, few coworkers invited to his London apartment. Unmarried; has eye for pretty girl but rarely follows through to a relationship. Some indication of tragic love affair in youth, but never talks about it. Both parents dead, has no close relatives. Is essentially a “loner” in a “rotten business.”

The Rand tales are a marvelous mix of hidden messages, crucial decisions, delicate problems, top-secret information, important missions, audacious operations, international complications (heads could roll, governments topple), interspersed with crimes, clues, interrogations, legwork, brain work, deductions, and surprising, sometimes amazing revelations, and all told with the narrative grip of causes célèbres and the immediacy of this morning’s newspaper.

*(Introduction Number Three on pages [101–102](#))*

# THE SPY WHO CAME TO THE BRINK

THE GIRL WAS SLENDER and dark-haired, and very pretty. “I feel like a fool,” she told Rand, gazing across the desk with uncertain eyes.

“Nonsense,” he reassured her. “You did the right thing in reporting it. Now suppose you start at the beginning and tell me everything that happened.”

“That’s the trouble. Nothing happened except that I saw this man taking a wax impression of the lock—the way they do in the movies, and—”

Rand smiled slightly. “You haven’t even told me your name, or where you work.”

“What? I thought my boss phoned you.”

“I’d like to hear it all from you, if I may. From the beginning.”

She shifted in the chair and crossed her legs. “Well, my name is Audrey Fowler, and I’m a pool typist in the Foreign Office. I’ve been there nearly three years and I like it a lot. The girls are so friendly, and there are lots of handsome men—”

Rand cleared his throat. “About yesterday.”

“Oh! Yes. I don’t usually work on Sunday, of course, but with all those television people around—”

“What television people?”

“They’re filming a show about diplomats and they got permission to take some shots in the Foreign Office lobby. I guess then they go back to the studio sets for the office scenes. Some of us had to be there, anyway, to help out.”

“Are you an American, Miss Fowler?”

“No. Why do you ask?”

“You talk a little like one.”

“I was born right here in London. But I see a lot of American movies.”

“Go on,” he urged. “I’m sorry I interrupted.”

“Anyway, I was coming out of the office on the second floor when I saw this man. He was at the door to the restricted wing, where the Message Center is. He took something out of the lock and dropped it very carefully into a little plastic bag. Honest, it was just like in the movies!”

Rand nodded. “A wax-coated blank key, probably. Do you know what’s kept in the Message Center?”

“Lists of embassy personnel in various countries, teletype machines—”

“Anything else?”

“Well, the diplomatic code—oh, the code book! I’ll bet that’s why they sent me to you!” She glanced over her shoulder at the frosted-glass door with the words *Department of Concealed Communications* neatly lettered on it.

Rand shifted in his chair and lit an American cigarette, one of his few vices. “What did the man do when you saw him?”

“He said good afternoon and went back downstairs, as if it was nothing at all.”

“Did you recognize him?”

“Of course I recognized him! That’s the whole point of it!”

“And who was he?”

“Barton O’Neill, the television actor. Why do you think Barton O’Neill would want to steal the diplomatic code?”

“That’s what we’re going to find out,” Rand said.

Rand rarely ventured into the other departments of British Intelligence, because his job was concerned more with words than with people. But men like Hastings were always glad to see him.

“Well, Rand, how’ve you been?”

“Good as ever.” He shook the hand of the balding man.

“What’s up? You usually bring trouble.”

Rand laughed. “Not this time. I only want some information. About a television actor named Barton O’Neill.”

“Officially or unofficially?”

“Let’s start with the official information.”

Hastings shrugged, pretending indifference. “He’s a character actor on television, bit parts mostly. Age forty-five, divorced twice.”

Rand reached for a cigarette. “Now the unofficial part.”

“We’ve suspected for some time that Barton O’Neill is one of the smartest foreign agents now operating in London. We think he’s available to the highest bidder, with most of his work done for Moscow or Cairo.”

“You haven’t arrested him?”

“He’s too clever for that. We had proof on only one job, but there were political reasons for not arresting him. Actually, we’ve never caught him violating the Official Secrets Act.”

“He’s British?” Rand asked.

The balding man nodded. "Did you ever hear of the Legion of Saint George, later called the British Free Corps? It was an attempt by the Germans during World War II to enlist British war prisoners to fight on the Russian front. It was mainly a propaganda effort, and only a few dozen men joined up. Several of them were tried for treason after the war, but we never had enough evidence against O'Neill. We've kept our eye on him ever since, though."

"Interesting."

"Now it's your turn, Rand. What's he up to?"

"One of the typists at the Foreign Office claims she saw him taking a wax impression of a lock there yesterday."

Hastings didn't seem surprised. "Since you and Double-C are interested, I gather the diplomatic code must be involved."

"It seems to be. I always thought the security arrangements there were safe enough. There's a twenty-four-hour guard in the lobby to check passes, and a locked door leading into the restricted wing. Then there's a guard at the door of the Message Center and people working inside day and night. Of course all personnel are carefully screened."

"And the code books?"

"They're constantly in use, so they're not locked up regularly. There's one on each of the six desks in the Center, where people are on duty at various hours. Messages come in from embassies constantly. They're decoded at the Center and sent upstairs by pneumatic tube."

Hastings scratched his head. "How did O'Neill get by the guard in the lobby?"

"He's apparently part of a television company that had permission to film in the lobby. With so much confusion it would be simple for him to slip away for a few minutes."

"Aren't those people screened before permission of that sort is granted?" Hastings asked querulously.

"Do you have any idea of the number of people necessary to produce a television show? It would take a month to check them all, and then who would you exclude? A security risk can include anyone from an outright spy to a homosexual or a neurotic. Besides, I assume the Foreign Office regarded their code books as quite inviolate."

"If he made a wax impression, he must be planning to return."

Rand nodded. "I already checked. The television company winds up its shooting on Wednesday evening, after regular office hours. Barton O'Neill is almost certain to

try for a code book then, if he's going to try at all."

"Even though this girl recognized him?"

"He's a bit player. He probably doesn't realize he was recognized by a film and television fan."

"Even after he gets through that locked door to the restricted wing, how can he walk past the inside guard and into the Message Center where people are always working, and then out again with a thick code book under his arm?"

Rand chewed on his lower lip. He was thinking of a man named Taz in Moscow who would give a great deal to be able to read the coded messages which passed between British embassies throughout the world. "That's what we'll find out Wednesday night," he said. "And I'll be there myself to give O'Neill a little surprise."

On Wednesday evening Rand felt good. The February air was sharp but clear, and for the first time in weeks his annual sinus attack seemed to be easing. The work at the office was well under control, and the minor irritation of an actor named Barton O'Neill promised to be cleared up with ease.

Rand had stationed one of his best men—a young fellow named Parkinson—inside the lobby of the Foreign Office, and he himself would be watching O'Neill's arrival with the other actors and technicians. When the actor used his duplicate key to enter the restricted wing, he'd be arrested on the spot. A simple affair, really, thanks to the girl's report.

Rand stood in the shadow of a little bookstore opposite the Foreign Office, waiting for O'Neill to appear. A few people hurried by, bound for a late dinner or the theater, but mainly the street was empty. Most of the halls of government had long since closed for the night.

The Double-C man recognized O'Neill almost at once. He was walking alone, carrying the sort of attaché case popular with diplomats and American advertising men. He was tall and grayishly handsome, much like the photos Rand had studied for the past two days. He looked like a government official. Or an actor.

Rand moved out to follow him at a distance of a dozen paces. He didn't see the other man until that man stepped directly in front of Barton O'Neill, materializing out of the shadows like a ghost. The man wore a dark leather jacket with a cap pulled down over his eyes. He might have spoken a word or two to O'Neill, but Rand couldn't be certain. Then, without warning, the stranger fired two shots through the pocket of his leather jacket.

Barton O'Neill half turned, clutching his chest. The man fired a third time and

then Rand was on him, toppling him backward to the pavement. Somewhere a woman screamed, and suddenly the street was alive with panic. Rand brought his fist down on the gunman's jaw and then tore the weapon free from limp fingers.

Parkinson and a uniformed policeman were already running across the street, fighting their way through the gathering crowd. "What happened?" Parkinson called out.

Rand, catching his breath, looked over at the actor's crumpled body. "This man shot O'Neill."

The policeman knelt for a moment, carefully avoiding the spreading pool of blood, and then shook his head. Barton O'Neill was dead, and the game was ended—and yet Rand had the gnawing feeling that he had witnessed a carefully planned drama that he didn't even begin to understand.

For most of Thursday the head of Double-C tried to ignore it. O'Neill's murder might only have been the work of some would-be bandit, or even of a wronged husband. There was no reason why it had to be connected with the actor's attempt to steal the diplomatic code. None at all.

All morning had been spent inspecting the extremely interesting contents of O'Neill's attaché case. There was a carefully made duplicate key to the locked door on the second floor of the Foreign Office. There was a man's black wig, a pair of bushy false eyebrows, two tubes of makeup, and a small metal mirror. There were three large candid photographs of a man identified as James Corbin, an employee of the Foreign Office Message Center.

And last, there was a book about the size of a desk dictionary, carefully bound in impressive black cloth, and filled with 882 pages of recipes and cooking suggestions.

"A cook book?" Parkinson asked, somewhat unbelieving.

Rand nodded. "But a specially bound cook book. The binding is almost identical with that of the diplomatic code books, and the size is the same too. I think we can piece together his plan. During a lull in the filming downstairs, he'd slip up to the second floor, just as he did on Sunday. In the stairwell he'd open his case and make himself up to look like James Corbin, one of the employees on the day shift. Then he'd simply unlock the door, walk past the inner guard with a mumble, go to Corbin's desk, and switch this cook book for one of the real code books. It would go into the attaché case, and he'd be out of there in a couple of minutes. Anyone on duty in the room would probably be too busy to give him more than a glance."

Parkinson shook his head. "He couldn't have gotten away with it."

“That’s something we’ll never know. He obviously thought he could. Check on this Corbin fellow right away, will you?”

Parkinson returned in an hour with the news that James Corbin—the real James Corbin—was vacationing in the south of France for two weeks.

“But,” Parkinson argued, “the inside guard would have asked him why he wasn’t away on his holiday. He’d have had to say something—and how do we know he could imitate Corbin’s voice well enough?”

“He was a character actor as well as a secret agent. We’ll have to assume he thought he could bring it off. He was in the building and he had a key, and that would have automatically canceled out a lot of suspicion. He must have met Corbin at some time, though—perhaps over a few beers at a pub one night. Maybe that’s how he learned about the size and binding of the code books if he didn’t learn it from another agent. We’ll have to question Corbin when he returns. Even a completely trustworthy person can let things slip at times.”

Toward mid-afternoon a phone call from Scotland Yard brought news of O’Neill’s killer. He was a suspected Communist named Ivar Kaden, an unemployed dockworker with a long criminal record. On the morning of the murder he’d been visited at his flat by a minor official of the Russian Embassy.

“All right,” Rand conceded reluctantly to Parkinson. “So the Russians order a man killed just as he is about to steal our code book for them. Why? Was it a mistake, or what?”

“They don’t make many mistakes, sir,” Parkinson said.

“Then why did they have O’Neill killed?”

“Because he knew too much. Spies always know too much.”

“Too much about what?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

Rand was still enough under forty to resent being called “sir,” but he never corrected Parkinson. The fellow did his job, and he was acquiring a good knowledge of the intricate world of Concealed Communications. But just then Rand wanted to think, so he sent Parkinson away.

Alone, staring out the window at the great sweep of the muddy Thames, he wondered how the weather was in Moscow that day. He often wondered about Moscow, and sometimes he tried to visualize the man in the Kremlin who was his counterpart. He knew nothing about Taz except his name, which was the same as a river in western Siberia. Sometimes he pictured a gentle little man who worked eight

hours a day over coded messages and secret writings, and then took the Moscow subway home to a wife and four waiting children. On days like this, though, when Taz became the, shadowy figure on the other side of a giant chessboard, Rand pictured something quite different.

Was it Taz who had pressed a button in Moscow and ordered the death of Barton O'Neill on a London street? The same Taz who went home every night to his wife and four waiting children? Rand sighed; he knew there were men in London and Washington and Paris who did the same thing.

There was a soft knock on the frosted-glass door and Hastings entered, carrying a folder of reports. "I have an idea about this O'Neill thing," he said.

"What's that?"

"Well, he was an actor. And actors often have stand-ins or doubles, don't they? Look, the Russians have been after one of those code books for five years now. They certainly wouldn't murder the one about to get it for them, would they? I think the man they killed was O'Neill's double, and the whole thing was some sort of diversion to cover the real theft of a code book."

Rand smiled. "They've checked the dead man's fingerprints. It was O'Neill, all right. Besides, a bit-part character actor wouldn't be likely to have a double." He paused to light a cigarette. "In any event, I was prepared for a possible diversion. The real code books were moved to a room upstairs on Monday. The Message Center has just been going through the motions since then, sending messages upstairs still encoded."

"Maybe that's it," Hastings said. "The Russians found out you were setting a trap and killed O'Neill."

But Rand would have none of it. "Everyone in that Message Center is completely loyal—I'd stake my life on it. Besides, if there is a spy there, O'Neill's complex plot would have been completely unnecessary."

"What about the girl who saw O'Neill take the impression of that lock?"

"Audrey Fowler? We've checked her. She's a bit naive, but perfectly trustworthy. She'd hardly have reported O'Neill in the first place if she weren't."

"So what do we have?"

Rand shrugged. "A dead spy."

"Why?"

"Perhaps because he knew too much. About something."

The next day, Friday, Rand went down to visit Ivar Kaden in jail. He interviewed him

in a bare room with pale green walls and barred windows. The man was sitting across the table while a guard stood silently with his back to the door.

“I’d like to ask you a few questions,” Rand began.

Kaden was stocky with middle age, and a shadow of beard traced itself across his cheeks. “You’re the one jumped me the other night,” he said, and his muscles seemed to ripple at the recognition.

“It was my job,” Rand told him. “The same as your job was killing Barton O’Neill.”

“You’re bloody right! That was my job and I did it.”

“How much did they pay you?”

A sly smile now. “Enough.”

“Why was he killed?”

“Look, mister, I don’t ask questions and I don’t answer them. I do my job, that’s all.”

“Are you a Communist, Ivar?”

The bulky man shifted in his chair, looking at his hands. “I guess so. I guess I would be if I knew what they were talking about.”

“Who paid you to kill O’Neill?”

His eyes came up to meet Rand’s. “Do you really think I’ll tell you, mister?”

“You don’t have to, Ivar. We know the orders came from a Russian agent. Just one thing—did they tell you *when* to shoot him?”

Ivar Kaden hesitated and then said, “Before he went into the Foreign Office on Wednesday night.”

“Yes,” Rand mumbled to himself. “Before.” He got to his feet and motioned to the guard. “I’m finished. You can take him back.”

Rand left the building and drove back to his office. He phoned the Foreign Office to check once more on the code books; all were safe. He had to face the fact that Barton O’Neill had been killed by the Russians at the very moment he was about to perform an important and vital mission for them.

There seemed only one possible explanation—that they had feared a trap and killed O’Neill to keep him from talking. But what could the actor tell? He was not a regular Communist agent—more of a freelance operator who sold his secrets to the highest bidder. It was doubtful that he would know any more about the secret workings of the Soviet espionage network in England than was already on file at British Intelligence.

Sitting alone in his office, Rand had almost decided to drop the investigation. After all, the code was safe, the spy was dead, the assassin was in prison. What more was there to do? Did it really matter *why* they'd had him killed?

Parkinson came in with a report. "This man from the Russian Embassy," he began, eager to deliver his news. "British Intelligence has a constant watch on him. His name is Barsky, and he's a known agent."

"That's the one who visited Ivar Kaden on Wednesday morning?"

Parkinson nodded. "But more important, a man believed to be O'Neill was seen in a pub with Barsky on Monday. Does that help?"

"It only confirms what we already suspected," Rand told him. "O'Neill must have got the idea of going after a code book when he landed the part in this television play being filmed in the lobby of the Foreign Office. He must have already known there was a man in the Message Center whom he could impersonate. And once he got that impression of the lock on Sunday, he knew the last obstacle to a code book was removed. So on Monday he made his offer to the Russian contact man."

"The Embassy sent the word to Moscow—to Taz, probably—and the word came back to kill O'Neill. Does that make any sense, sir?"

Yes, Rand conceded to himself, they were, back to the same puzzle. "Many things don't make sense in this business, Parkinson," he replied weakly.

"Perhaps they thought he already had one of the code books. Using the key and his disguise, he could have entered the building at any time."

Rand shook his head. "One thing we failed to find in his attaché case was any sort of false identification. He apparently was unable to forge the necessary pass to get him past the guard in the lobby. He could only work his plan when he was already inside the lobby with the television crew. Since he had to have time to make the duplicate key, he couldn't try for a code book until Wednesday night."

"Without identification, how could he have gotten by the second guard, at the Message Center door?"

"You know how those things are, Parkinson. The first guard would have been a lot more careful than a guard checking on only a half dozen people he sees every day. Once through that locked door, O'Neill was apparently sure he could bring off the rest of it by using his makeup and his acting abilities."

"So what have we got, sir?"

Rand closed his eyes. "We have an agent with a better-than-ever chance of stealing one of our diplomatic code books and getting away with it. Although it would

be tremendously important to the Russians to get their hands on it, they have the man killed just before his mission is accomplished. Why?”

Why? The question remained, even after Parkinson had left the office. Rand sat brooding about it in silence, knowing that he could never drop the case until he knew the answer. He thought of talking to the girl at the Foreign Office again, but somehow he knew the answer didn't rest there.

He went to the window and pressed his forehead against the cold glass, staring out at the muddy Thames, trying to put himself in the place of a man in Moscow whom he'd never met.

Why did they kill him? Because he knew too much? No.

Because he knew too little?

Rand's head came away from the window and he snatched up the telephone. “This is an emergency! Get me the Foreign Secretary!”

“Too little?” Hastings repeated later, not sure he understood.

Rand nodded from behind a cloud of relaxed cigarette smoke. “O'Neill was killed because he knew too *little*, not too much. I knew the code book had to be involved somehow, and then I remembered an incident in World War II. A team of American and British cryptanalysts broke the code used by Japanese military attaches. But the OSS wasn't informed of this, and they managed to steal a copy of the code book in Lisbon. Of course the Japanese immediately stopped using the stolen code—and *the cryptanalysts had to start all over again!*”

“You mean the Reds ...?”

Rand nodded and poured some brandy. “I'm sure of it. Remember, we've been using that same diplomatic code for five years. Sometime in those five years Taz's people broke it. Now, what would you do, Hastings, if you were sitting in Moscow with our secret diplomatic code broken, reading our messages every week, and some freelance agent you couldn't control said he was going to steal that very code for you?”

Hastings nodded, seeing it all clearly. “Even if he got away with it, we'd have discovered the theft in a couple of hours or days and promptly changed the code. And they couldn't just order him not to steal the book, because he'd have done it anyway and sold it to another government. All they could do is what they did—kill him before he stole it.”

“A dirty business,” Rand said, staring out at the lights of the London night. “Dirty.”

“What will you do now?”

Rand took a sip of brandy. “I’ve already done it. Our embassies switched to an emergency code book this afternoon. Taz is in for a surprise when he tries to decode the next message.”